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THE KINGDOM OF GOD
IN THE NEW TESTAMENT



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The Kingdom of God *in the* New Testament

BY

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PREFACE

THE student of the New Testament cannot but realize that the idea which is everywhere fundamental is that of the Kingdom of God. It was primary with Jesus himself, and when we look beneath the surface it was no less so with Paul and the later teachers. Nothing is so necessary for the understanding of our religion as to grasp something of the meaning of this central idea.

The chief aim of the present book is to determine how Jesus conceived of the Kingdom of God. For this purpose there must first be some inquiry into the origin and earlier history of the conception; and too often this has been deemed sufficient. It is assumed that Jesus understood the hope of the Kingdom in its traditional Jewish form, and that when this has been ascertained we have the key to his whole message. An effort has been made in the present book to indicate the main directions in which his teaching was developed by his followers. Their thought, expressed though it is in very different language, is usually the best commentary on his own.

In the course of this study I have been impressed more than ever with the depth and many-sidedness of Jesus' message, and am painfully aware of the inadequacy of my brief exposition. Its limitations are due, I would hope, not merely to lack of knowledge and insight, but to an honest desire to find nothing in the Gospel records which is not there.

E. F. SCOTT.

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THE KINGDOM OF GOD
IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

CHAPTER I

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

(1) *The Old Testament Conception*

It seems almost impossible to define the Christian "gospel." Sometimes it is identified with our religion as a whole, sometimes with some element in it which is regarded as central. To accept the gospel is to believe in the Atonement, or the love of God, or the revelation in Christ, or the fact of human brotherhood. Yet it is well to remember that the word which is now used so loosely had, at the outset, a meaning which was clearly understood. "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God and saying, The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand." This, in its origin, was the Christian message. It was to undergo a marvelous development, in the teaching of Jesus himself and in the later thought of the church; but the "good news" has always been essentially what it was at first—the announcement of the Kingdom of God.

It is evident from the manner in which Jesus made

the announcement that he took up an idea which was already familiar. He did not explain what he meant by the Kingdom, for he could assume that all his hearers were looking forward to it. Their hope for it had newly been quickened by John the Baptist, and it has sometimes been held that since Jesus repeated the earlier proclamation, almost in the same words, he must have begun his work as a disciple of John. Such a theory is needless, for there was nothing new or peculiar in the idea of the Kingdom. The people had responded to John for no other reason than that he seemed to confirm their own secret hope. They had long been thinking of the Kingdom and wondering when it would come, and a prophet had now arisen who declared that it was close at hand. The hope of the Kingdom was bound up with the religion of Israel, and, in one form or another, it lies at the heart of every religion. Men have always been conscious, however dimly, of a great end in which all things will at last find their consummation. Without some faith of this kind religion, and life itself, would have no basis or meaning. Before we can make anything of Jesus' teaching we need to realize that he did not start from a conception which had sprung up in his own mind, or in some given

time or environment. His message has appealed to all men because the hope of the Kingdom, taken in its larger sense, is common to all mankind.

In the religion of Israel, however, we must seek for the immediate origin of the idea of Jesus. Its roots may be traced to the belief, characteristic of almost all Semitic religions, that the god was king of the territory in which he was worshiped. The god, in many instances, had no proper name but was simply known as "the King"—Moloch or Melkart or Baal. In this manner Jahveh was King of Israel. When a human king was finally chosen it was in face of a strong protest from the prophet Samuel, supported, it would seem, by a large body of the people. The idea persisted, long after the royal house was firmly established, that the reigning king was only the viceroy of the invisible one. It was this belief that secured liberty to the prophets, and gave weight to their utterances. They came forward in the name of Jahveh, the true King of Israel. They disclosed his will and insisted that he must be obeyed, since apart from him the earthly king possessed no real authority.

In its origin, therefore, the belief in a divine kingship had much the same meaning for Israel as for

other Semitic peoples. Jahveh was the ruler and protector of the nation, assisted its armies in battle, imposed certain laws and ordinances to which it must submit. But from the outset there was one all-important difference between Jahveh and the neighboring gods. His peculiar attribute was righteousness, and from this it followed that his interest could not be confined to the success of Israel. He favored his people on condition that they were faithful to a moral law, and if they transgressed it he would turn against them. With growing reflection on the nature of Jahveh as a righteous God it was perceived that his kingship must extend far beyond the borders of Israel. Inasmuch as he stood for the cause of right all nations were accountable to him, even though they worshiped other gods. It was not doubted that these alien gods had a real existence, and ruled over their own peoples as Jahveh over his, but Jahveh was somehow paramount, since he represented that moral order to which all men were bound to submit. Israel had been chosen by a unique God, who was known as yet only by his own people but was none the less King of the whole earth. The day was coming when all nations would own his sovereignty.

Out of this conviction arose the further one that

the God of Israel was the Creator and Governor of the world. Israel, to be sure, was by no means singular in so regarding its God. Every race has developed some kind of cosmology in which the beginning of things and the operation of all natural forces are connected with its own divinities. The creation story in Genesis can be traced back to much older narratives in which Babylonian or Egyptian deities were described as making the world. But the Hebrew people could feel that the claim of Jahveh was on a different footing. He was the God of righteousness,—the upholder of that moral order which must be the basis of the universe. God's work in creation is the theme of some of the grandest passages in the Old Testament, and it is always associated with his other work of maintaining righteousness. Just as Greek thought assumed that Reason was the principle behind all things, so the Hebrew mind took its stand on the moral law. In the God who upheld that law it discovered the Maker of the world. And as he had created he also governed it. Sometimes he is himself regarded as directing the stars and winds and lightnings; more often he appears as the Lord of an infinite host of spirits who execute his will. He dwells in heaven and from that height keeps watch

over his creation and orders it according to his will.

Thus from the idea of Jahveh as King of Israel arose that of the one God, who reigns over all nations and who made and governs the universe. There was one problem, however, which forced itself on the Hebrew thinkers, and out of their effort to answer it emerged that hope of the Kingdom of God which Judaism was to bequeath to Christianity. If God is the universal King why is he acknowledged only in Israel? Above all, why does he permit his own people to be subjected by nations that refuse to own him? The prophets and psalmists are always grappling with this problem, and arrive, by different paths, at the same solution. As yet God is only known in Israel, but through Israel he will assert his universal kingship. His dealings with Israel are all directed to this end. By the afflictions which he lays on his people he is cleansing them and training them in faithfulness, so that they may be worthy of their great destiny. On the higher levels of prophecy the purified Israel of the future is conceived as attracting all nations, by its high example, to the service of the one God. More often it is assumed that Israel when fully disciplined will be restored to God's favor

and advanced by him to the sovereign place. As King of this preëminent people God will reign at last over the world.

It is somewhat remarkable that the actual term "Kingdom of God" does not occur in the Old Testament. This may be simply a matter of accident, or is more probably due to the concrete style of Old Testament language and thought. There is no attempt to formulate the idea of God's Kingship in a set doctrine. The writers are concerned with the actual fact that the world is ordered by a divine power, which can be no other than the God whom Israel worships as altogether wise and righteous. Although the abstract term is wanting the idea itself is everywhere present. "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever."¹ "Thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kings of the earth."² "The Holy One, the creator of Israel, your king."³ "As I live, saith the King, whose name is the Lord."⁴ "His kingdom ruleth over all."⁵ "The Lord sitteth as king for ever."⁶ Perhaps the idea comes to its fullest expression in the 145th Psalm, a late composition, in which the writer endeavors to gather up the substance of the

¹ Ex. 15:18.

² Is. 43:15.

⁵ Ps. 103:19.

³ 2 Kings, 19:15.

⁴ Jer. 46:18.

⁶ Ps. 29:10.

whole preceding Psalter. The truth which he fastens on as central is that of the Kingship of God. "They shall speak of the glory of thy Kingdom and talk of thy power, to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts and the glory of the majesty of his kingdom. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations." It was inevitable that the later thinkers, reflecting on passages like these, which are scattered all through the Old Testament, should concentrate them in one set phrase, "the Kingdom of God."

The Old Testament conception, when we examine it more closely, has always a double aspect. (1) On the one hand it is assumed that God is already King. He made the world and governs it in righteousness. He is over all nations and uses them, although they are ignorant of him, as the instruments of his will. This faith in God's sovereignty is the very corner stone of Old Testament religion. It gives meaning to the whole demand for confidence in God and entire obedience to his will. "The Lord is King, be the people never so impatient; he sitteth between the cherubim, be the earth never so unquiet." This

* Ps. 145:11ff.

magnificent rendering in the old Prayer-book version⁸ is true at least to the spirit of the religion which finds utterance in the Psalms. God is reigning now, above all the world's tumult. In this knowledge his servants can trust him and wait on him patiently. (2) On the other hand it is recognized that God's kingship lies in the future. He is the one true God, whose will must prevail; but as yet he is known only to his people. They look for a coming day when he will overcome all usurping powers and assert himself as King. So the prophets keep before them the vision of a new age when the reign of God will be fully manifest. In that happy time Israel will be exalted, the cause of justice will be established, the earth will be full of the glory of the Lord. Nature in that day will be restored to its pristine glory, and the wolf will lie down with the lamb, the cattle will feed in large pastures, the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun.⁹

Behind this conception of a glorious future there doubtless lies an ancient Hebrew mythology which cannot now be reconstructed in detail, though traces of it may be discerned in many Old Testament

⁸ Ps. 99:1.

⁹ Is. 11:1ff.; 30:23ff.

allusions. It was apparently believed that the course of the world would swing round again to the beginning, and that there would be a final consummation in which the conditions of Eden would return. These mythological ideas were probably derived from Babylonian religion and were reënforced in the later Old Testament age by influences that came in from other alien sources. In many religions we find the conception of a world-cycle, a succession of ages which run their period, each worse than the one before it, until the wheel has made its full circle and the end is merged in the beginning. This belief is familiar to everyone in classical poetry and philosophy. The ages of silver and bronze have given place to the pitiless age of iron in which our lot is cast, but beyond it lies the Golden Age, with which the world began and to which it is returning. "Magnus ab integro saeclorum nascitur ordo."¹⁰ A similar belief contributed to the shaping of the Hebrew conception of the Kingdom of God, but this idea of a happier future inherent in the order of nature is blended, in the prophetic vision, with the moral convictions involved in Hebrew religion. Since God is righteous he is working for the victory

¹⁰ Virgil, *Eclogues*, 4:2.

of righteousness. Since he has made a covenant with his people he will be true to it and at last bring them deliverance. He will reign from Mount Zion and all nations will serve him. King over a righteous people he will through them extend his dominion over the whole earth.

The Kingdom of God, then, appears in the Old Testament under these two aspects. It is at once a present reality and a hope which will only be realized in the glorious future. In the later history of the idea we meet constantly with the same apparent contradiction, and in the teaching of Jesus, as we shall see, it has given rise to serious problems. It might appear, when one set of passages is marshaled against another, that he was inconsistent with himself, or that our records are wholly at variance. But when we examine that Old Testament presentation in which the idea is set forth in its simplest form we can see that there is no real contradiction. In the future God will make fully manifest what he is in the present. His sovereignty exists now and has ever existed, as the sun shines always though it may be hidden by intervening clouds. The hope that God will reign is grounded in the confidence that he is reigning now. Believing that he is always on the

throne his people can look for the time when he will overthrow all opposing powers and declare himself King.

(2) The Persian Influence

At this point it is necessary to take some account of an influence which is already apparent in the later Old Testament books, and which was destined to transform the whole conception of the Kingdom. Hebrew religion, as has been indicated, was affected by other religions, one of which was of primary importance in the three or four centuries before Christ. For the earlier half of this period Palestine was included in the great Persian empire, and of all the alien governments to which the country has submitted from time to time this one appears to have been most willingly accepted. The political and commercial intercourse with Persia laid the way open to influences of a spiritual kind. A religion had arisen in Persia which must be reckoned, after that of Israel itself, as the noblest of all the ancient forms of faith. In its ethical fervor and its lofty spiritual temper the religion of Zoroaster had a real affinity with that of the prophets. On its speculative side it had been molded, as the religion of Israel

had been, by the ancient Babylonian beliefs. Thus it was easy, when the two religions were thrown into close contact, for Persian ideas to coalesce with Jewish. The foreign influence made itself chiefly felt in thought about the future and the unseen world. Persian religion was based on the theory of a conflict between two opposing powers, Good and Evil, Light and Darkness, Ahura Mazda and Ahri-man. Men were called on to take their part in this holy war, and increase the power of Ahura Mazda by the threefold exercise of "good thoughts, good words, good deeds." The religion has sometimes been described as a metaphysical dualism, in which the conflict of good and evil was accepted as an eternal one, involved in the very nature of all being. This, however, is to forget the ethical interest which determined the whole teaching. The ethic was indeed combined with a metaphysical mythology, but the ultimate victory of the good was assumed to be certain, or rather the good alone was regarded, from an absolute point of view, as having real existence.

The religion distinguished between two kinds of Time: on the one hand, "time of the long period," embracing the whole history of the world; on the other hand "boundless time" or eternity. From this

eternal sphere all evil is utterly excluded; it emerges only within this episode of earthly time in which man's lot is cast. During this period the powers of Ahura Mazda and Ahriman are evenly balanced, so that all human effort carries weight in the decision of the issue. The period extends for twelve thousand years, and is divided into four ages, each of three thousand years. With the advent of Zoroaster the final age began, and will include three millennial periods. At the end of each of them will appear a Savior, who will gather to himself all who have striven for the good in the thousand previous years. The end of the final millennium will see the advent of a supreme Savior (Saoshyant), who will preside over the great transition from the temporal to the eternal. Ahura Mazda will achieve his victory and all who have served him will have their abode forever in his realm of light. The present world will be absorbed in another, the "Kingdom of Ahura," the "good kingdom," the "kingdom of good thought, word and deed." It lies in the future, and the hope of it is the supreme motive for all right effort; yet in a sense it is already present. This idea is expressed mythologically in the strange doctrine of Khashthra Vairyā, in which the "good kingdom" is personified.

Ahura Mazda is surrounded by six high Spirits or Archangels (Amesha Spentas) who are conceived as dwelling in the planets. But while personal beings they represent the grand attributes of the supreme Lord, and the third in rank (after "good spirit" and "divine law") is his "sovereignty." Thus while the Kingdom is only to be realized at the end of the ages it exists already as a living power. It can be apprehended almost personally as one of the angelic ministers through whom God supports and directs his people.

From this brief outline it will be apparent that Persian religion offers many striking parallels to conceptions that are familiar to us in Judaism. In both religions we have the doctrines of a future life, a Messiah, an adversary of God, angelic beings, a new age, a Kingdom of God. The resemblances are so marked that some modern scholars have held that Jewish religion in its later phase was completely refashioned under the Persian influence, and that most of the beliefs which have come down to us in Christianity are more Persian than Jewish.¹¹ In this view there is no doubt a measure of truth. The

¹¹ This view has been elaborated with immense learning but in a one-sided fashion by Von Gall, *Basileia Theos*.

Hebrew mind was not speculative and had never attempted to throw its great ideas into theological form. It welcomed the Persian speculations, as it afterwards did the Greek, for the purpose of developing and formulating its own beliefs. But the debt to Persian thought must not be exaggerated. It becomes evident, on closer analysis, that almost all the ideas which might seem to be borrowed from Persia were already present in Hebrew religion. Little was derived from the alien source except a new mode of expression for these native ideas. In any case it needs always to be remembered that a belief cannot be transferred from one religion to another without undergoing a change of substance. Properly speaking there are no foreign elements in the later Judaism. Ideas that came in from without have all been assimilated, and serve only to mature and define the Hebrew beliefs.

In several ways the Persian influence brought this fuller development to the Old Testament conception of the Kingdom of God. (1) A number of ideas which had hitherto remained separate could now be apprehended in their unity. It is impressed on us in the earlier writings that in the service of God men will find life and happiness, they will attain

to the true wisdom, they will advance the good of Israel and thereby of the world. As yet there was no means of summing up, under a single conception, all these motives which give meaning to religion.

It was under the Persian influence that this synthesis was achieved. Men are placed on this earth to take sides with God in his great warfare and share at last in his victory. All things would reach their fulfillment in the coming of the Kingdom of God.

(2) The idea of the Kingdom could now be detached in some measure from purely national interests. It had arisen from the belief in Jahveh as King of Israel, and through all its later history this particularism was stamped on it like a birthmark. Along with the thought of God as the world's King there was always the assurance that his kingship would mean the exaltation of Israel. Yet in the later period the national hope tends to fall into the background. Israel will have a peculiar share in the blessedness of the future; this is assumed as self-evident. But increasing stress is laid on the larger implications of the hope. The deliverance of Israel comes to be regarded as only the prelude to the true reign of God. (3) The conception was lifted to the transcendental plane. In the Old Testament the Kingdom

is described in terms of earthly perfection and felicity. It will be ushered in by a king who springs from the house of David. It will have Jerusalem as its center, and will insure peace and justice and pure worship for all nations. It will be accompanied with such conditions of nature as prevailed in the days of Eden. According to the later conception the Kingdom will involve the change of the whole present order into another. God will interpose by way of miracle and create everything anew. The scene of the Kingdom will be either heaven itself or an earth transformed into the likeness of heaven. It is here, perhaps, that the Persian strain of thought is most indubitable.

The Old Testament picture of the future even when it is touched with mythological colors always keeps close to earthly realities. The new age is conceived as one which will come by natural process and perfect the things we know. For the later thinkers the Kingdom is wholly supernatural. The world of darkness gives place, as in Persian religion, to the world of light. (4) It was from Persia that Judaism took over the imaginative forms under which the coming of the Kingdom was now conceived. We hear of angelic powers engaged on the

side of God or against him; of a series of dramatic events which lead up to the great change; of a heaven and hell and a hierarchy of spirits. In the Old Testament we meet with none of these speculations on the nature of the unseen world and the life hereafter, while in Persian religion they are all-pervading. To a great extent the Persian mythology may be said to have passed over into Judaism.

(3) *The Kingdom in Apocalyptic*

It is in the so-called apocalyptic writings that the idea of the Kingdom is fully developed, under these Persian influences. The term "apocalyptic" is commonly reserved for a literature which flourished during the period from 200 B.C. to 100 A.D. Its earliest surviving document (apart from some fragments of the book of Enoch) is the book of Daniel, and the latest is 4th Esdras. In these opening and closing utterances the apocalyptic genius attains to its highest level. Between them, however, there are some thirty or forty books which have been recovered in whole or in part within our own times. These writings which had passed so long into oblivion have thrown a flood of light on the Judaism which gave birth to Christianity

The apocalyptic literature, properly so-called, had thus its origin in the second century before Christ; but it represents a type of thought which was much older. Several of the Psalms may be classed as apocalyptic; ever and again in the prophetic books we meet with passages which are purely apocalyptic in character. It is hard, indeed, to draw the line between prophecy and apocalyptic. A difference is certainly apparent when we turn from Isaiah or Jeremiah to Enoch and 4th Esdras. The prophets were responsible leaders of a free people, and were concerned with real situations in which they sought to ascertain God's will and make it effective in the national life. The apocalyptists also had a message, but knew that it could do nothing to control events, and were content to build Utopias where the prophets had tried to plan out a future that might be realized. Yet apocalyptic may fairly be regarded as the out-growth or at least the aftermath of prophecy. Under the changed conditions there was no place for prophecy in the old sense, but prophetic activity was continued in a form adapted to the time.

It has been generally assumed that the apocalyptic books arose as a popular literature, in contrast to the abstract discussions of the official Rabbis. Just

as among ourselves the plain people used to read the *Pilgrim's Progress* while the learned were occupied with doctrinal treatises, so it is held that in the time of Christ ordinary men and women sought their spiritual nourishment in those strange picture-books which the official teachers despised. On this ground it is argued that the Gospels must be understood in the light of the apocalypses. Jesus was a man of the people, nurtured on the popular literature, and in that literature we must seek the key to his thinking. One cannot but feel that this whole theory is founded on a very doubtful assumption. The apocalypses with their dreary artificial constructions and difficult symbolism can never have been popular. No one can imagine a normally constituted person in any age reading them for pleasure. For that part they seem to have been originally composed in Hebrew, which in the time of Jesus had become a learned language, employed in much the same way as Latin in the days of Bacon and Milton. So far from being a popular literature it is much more probable that the apocalyptic books were meant to be recondite. The popular teaching was that of the synagogue, in which the scriptures were expounded with the aid of homely illustrations and pithy maxims

bearing on ordinary life. Whatever its shortcomings the religion of the Law was eminently popular, and no pains were spared to make it fully intelligible to the people, who were expected to guide themselves, in everyday conduct, by the demands of the Law. Apocalyptic had none of this practical importance. It dealt not with moral and religious duties but with the speculative background of religion. Its interest was purely intellectual and theological. To our minds, certainly, there is little in the apocalyptic books that suggests a philosophy; but we must remember that philosophy in the Greek sense had as yet no existence among the Jews. The need which apocalyptic sought to answer was in essence the same as was later to find its satisfaction in philosophy. Religious beliefs had given rise to far-reaching questions as to the meaning and end of life, and the relation of man to the whole scheme of things. Where the Greeks tried to answer such questions by philosophical speculation the Jews turned to apocalyptic.

Here it is necessary to touch on another misconception which has obtained a wide currency. We are told that the apocalyptic writings were "tracts for bad times"—that they reflected a mood of

pessimism which the evils of the time had made universal. From this point of view the whole purpose of apocalyptic has commonly been explained. The nation had entered on a disastrous period when it seemed as if nothing could be hoped for so long as the world remained on its present basis. All regenerating forces were dead, and nothing would suffice but that the whole existing order should be dissolved and a new one arise in its place. Now as a matter of historical fact the period in which apocalyptic chiefly flourished was a fairly prosperous one. Israel, after the Maccabæan revival, was governed by its native kings and ranked high among Eastern nations. The reign of Herod was one of outward splendor, and the mass of the people, under that strong and able ruler, enjoyed peace and security. Under the Roman administration, galling as it may have been to the national pride, justice and order were probably better maintained in Palestine than ever before or since. In the Gospel history and parables we have to do with a people who were protected by the laws, were free to follow their regular callings and established customs, were able to depend on the future and make provision for it. If fanatical agitators had left them alone they would

have been well content, like the rest of the world, with the Roman peace. The gloom of the apocalypses may be ascribed not so much to pessimism as to disillusionment. That better age foretold by the prophets had in some measure been realized, with what results? Instead of a reign of God there was an Israel divided into jealous factions, intent on worldly and ignoble aims, less satisfied amidst all the material welfare than in the old days of strife and poverty. And the mood of disappointment which these books reflect was not due wholly to outward conditions. It was largely the outcome of a real advance in religious thought and sentiment. The apocalyptic writings certainly stand on a far lower plane than the Old Testament; their most impressive passages are nothing but faint echoes of the prophets. Yet we are constantly aware that these later thinkers are reaching out toward higher conceptions than those which had dawned on even the greatest of their predecessors. They have grown conscious that to man's deeper hopes there can be no earthly fulfillment. Behind all their fantastic pictures there is a genuine sense of an invisible world which must be the true end of all our seeking.

It is from this point of view that the new con-

ception of the Kingdom of God which finds expression in these books must ultimately be explained. Doubtless much is due to the influence of Persian religion, with its belief in the "good kingdom" which will be realized in that other world where Ahura Mazda reigns in light. But Jewish thought had by itself advanced beyond the Old Testament hope of a happier earth in which Israel will be exalted and attract all nations to Mount Zion. Like the prophets the apocalypticists contrast the present conditions with those of a glorious future, but it is now assumed that this future, which no human endeavor had brought nearer, will break in suddenly by the immediate act of God. It is assumed, too, that the new world which will arise will be different in kind from the present one. The order that now is will give place to a heavenly order. Man's life will be set free from all the burdens and hindrances which make it incapable of true well-being. God, who is now distant and apparently forgetful of his people, will dwell with them as an immediate presence. The difference between the earlier and the later outlook is marked by the changed conception of the Messiah. He is no longer an earthly king, succeeding to the throne of David, but a supernatural being who will

appear from heaven. This transformation may owe something to the Persian doctrine of the mysterious Savior who will bring the world's history to its close; but something like it was involved in the new manner of conceiving the Kingdom. Only a heavenly being was adequate to the part now assigned to the Messiah of presiding over the great transition from the earthly to the new and higher order.

The actual term "Kingdom of God" very seldom occurs in the apocalyptic books, though it is prominent in the Psalms of Solomon, and elsewhere is at least suggested. In view of the constant use of this term by Jesus the absence of it is significant. If he had been closely dependent on the apocalyptic tradition it is difficult to understand why he took as his watchword a term which his predecessors had avoided. They prefer to speak vaguely of "those days," "the coming days," "the consummation," "the end of the world." Why they dislike a term which had certainly become current in the thought of the time is not altogether easy to explain. Perhaps they adapt their language to the convention by which they speak in the character of revered figures of the past. Enoch, Moses, Ezra and the others could only refer to "the coming days," where later teachers had

arrived at a clear conception of a "Kingdom of God." More likely, the term is avoided with a definite object. The Kingdom had become associated with those conditions foretold by the prophets when Israel would be delivered and Jerusalem would be the center of a happier earth. The apocalypticists have something more in their minds. What they look for is the complete change of all that now exists. There will not only be a reign of God but a new kind of world.

This new outlook is strikingly illustrated by the manner in which the hope of the Kingdom becomes, in some of the books, a twofold one. On the one hand there will be a Kingdom which will endure for a limited period—four hundred or a thousand years. These are the "days of the Messiah," who will work deliverance for Israel and institute a reign of peace and justice in which the whole earth will share. On the other hand there is "the coming age," which will set in when that age of the earthly Paradise has run its course. According to one forecast the Messiah himself, along with all whom he has governed, will die. The world will pass out of being and a new one will arise in which God will reign for ever and ever. This is the true "Kingdom," to

which the other will serve only as the vestibule. In this double expectation we can discern the effort to conserve the old national hope while at the same time transcending it. Since it was consecrated by Old Testament prophecy and never ceased to be a cherished element in Jewish religion, a place had to be made for it in connection with the larger hope; but the ultimate religious interests have now been detached from it. The distinction, however, between the Kingdom and the Coming Age was difficult to maintain. In Jewish thought generally and in the apocalyptic books themselves the two ideas constantly run together. The coming age is not separated from the days of the Messiah but includes them, as an integral part of the Kingdom.

It may be said, therefore, that in their view of the future the apocalyptic writers have three main interests. (1) There is first the purely speculative one of throwing light on the final mysteries. What is the purpose of the world? How must we imagine the future so as to find a solution to all the age-long problems? From one point of view apocalyptic is a metaphysical system, except that these Jewish thinkers do not work with philosophical categories but by way of ecstasy and intuition. (2) Again, there is

the national interest. The hope of the Kingdom had sprung out of the belief in Jahveh as King of Israel, and however the hope was enlarged and sublimated this remained as a constant element in it. The reign of God over the world was unthinkable apart from the exaltation of Israel. Even when the attempt was made to rise above mere nationalism a concession had to be made to it in the doctrine of the "days of the Messiah." (3) Along with the national interest the ethical one which had always been blended with it in the religion of Israel was fully recognized. The apocalyptic writers are concerned with the triumph of righteousness, not merely with that of Israel. They assume that Israel will inherit the Kingdom inasmuch as this nation alone has stood for righteousness. It might appear, at first sight, as if the apocalyptic writers, with their dream of a new world emerging by a sudden miracle, have lost hold of all realities. They have exchanged the prophetic faith in the ultimate victory of right for a mere visionary hope. Yet in one sense the spirit of faith has never expressed itself so splendidly as in those apocalyptic dreamers. Believing as they do that the present world is only fit for destruction they are yet assured that righteousness will in the end prevail. Since the cause

of God has failed another world will arise out of the ashes of this one in which he will accomplish his will. This invincible faith in a righteousness which nothing can overcome is the inner pulse of apocalyptic.

(4) The Rabbinical Teaching

The apocalyptic books cannot, as we have seen, be regarded as a popular literature. They are allusive and recondite, full of detail which would have little interest or meaning for the common mind. A distinction, however, must be made between the books themselves and the broad ideas on which they rest. No one would say that Dante addressed his great poem to a popular audience. It was difficult for his own age as it is difficult now, and of this he was well aware. Yet it accepted the general beliefs about hell and purgatory and heaven as they were understood in the Middle Ages. Its power consists in the spiritual insight which is applied to these current beliefs. In like manner the apocalyptic writers set out from ideas which were held, in some form, by everybody. They elaborate these ideas and seek to penetrate into their deeper import, but adhere in the main to the common positions of Judaism.

This must be borne in mind when we turn from the apocalyptic view of the Kingdom to that which meets us in the Rabbinical literature.

This literature contains many references to the "Malkuth Shamaim" or Kingdom of Heaven, and this term has held a central place in Judaism ever since it finally assumed its historical form. According to a well-known maxim, "the prayer in which the Malkuth Shamaim is not mentioned is no true prayer." Here, however, as in almost all matters of Rabbinical teaching, the question of date is troublesome. The earliest reference to the Kingdom of Heaven which can be fixed with any certainty comes from a time about 70 A.D. Is it to be inferred from this that the term was adopted comparatively late, perhaps as a result of the prominence given to it in Christianity or in the message of John the Baptist? This is highly improbable, for in the Gospel records it is plainly understood to be generally familiar. Rabbinical teaching, moreover, was the deposit of a long tradition, and the date of the written documents affords no clue to the time when the ideas originated. We may conclude with practical certainty that Rabbis in the days of Jesus were accustomed to speak of the Kingdom of God, and

employed the term in much the same sense as was given to it in the later literature.

According to the Rabbinical view God has ever been king, but this truth has only emerged gradually and still awaits its full manifestation. God revealed himself as King to Abraham, and more amply and clearly to Moses on Mount Sinai. Through Moses the whole people of Israel learned to worship him as King. The world at large is still ignorant of him or refuses to own him; but the time is coming when his kingship will be everywhere acknowledged. This will be the Kingdom of Heaven—the universal reign of the true religion which is now known only in Israel. The great text on which the doctrine is made to hang is that in Zechariah 14:9: "And the Lord shall be King over the whole earth; in that day the Lord shall be one and his name one." Sometimes the term "Malkuth Shamaim" is little more than another name for monotheism. The Kingdom will be fulfilled when all heathen religions perish and the whole world is united in the worship of the one God.

In the Rabbinical teaching, therefore, the Kingdom is both present and future. It will not fully come until God is acknowledged by all nations,

but in Israel he is already King. Not only so but the Kingdom is frequently associated, in the closest manner, with individual religion. Israel as a holy nation is under the divine Kingship, but those Israelites who are zealous for the true God and make it their one aim to obey him are subject to it in a peculiar manner. The Kingdom realizes itself whenever a man submits his life to God. Not a few passages can be gathered from the Rabbinical literature in which there is a real approach to the Gospel saying, "The Kingdom of God is within you." Too much, however, may be made of these passages, which must be taken, for the most part, in a purely formal sense. The test of inward submission to the Kingdom is strict performance of the Law. According as a man observes or neglects a given ordinance he is said to take on or throw off the Kingdom. The word, indeed, often degenerates into a sort of technical term for the repetition of the Shema—the stated confession of the unity of God. In the act of reciting this formula the pious Jew is said to "take on himself the yoke of the Kingdom."

The Rabbis taught, then, that in the present age the Kingdom has a sporadic and hidden existence in the lives of isolated men who submit themselves

to God; in the coming age it will be universal and manifest. How is this change to be effected? In Hellenistic Judaism we meet with the idea that it will come of its own accord as the intrinsic truth of the Jewish religion forces conviction on unbelievers. But the prevailing view, and probably the only one held by Palestinian teachers, was that God himself would bring the change to pass by way of miracle. It was recognized that the world as it is now could never accept the Kingship of God. The existing kingdoms, especially the all-powerful empire of Rome, must be destroyed before there could arise that condition of things when God would reign. Here we discover the essential identity of the Rabbinical view with the apocalyptic one. It has often been contended, and one might think justly, that they were entirely different. For apocalyptic the Kingdom meant a new order of things, and the hope of it was entangled with fantastic ideas of cataclysm and judgment; while for the Rabbis the Kingdom was nothing but the reign of true religion in the life of the world and in the hearts of men. It is maintained that the origin of Jesus' conception must be sought in the Rabbinical and not in the apocalyptic tradition. On the face of it this is much

the more probable theory. Jesus was a son of the Synagogue, and his mind was far more likely to be influenced by the teaching impressed on him since childhood than by the wild speculations of certain eccentric books. But the truth is that between the Rabbinical and the apocalyptic ideas there was no real difference. The authors of the apocalypses were perhaps themselves Rabbis. Their aim was to explore the background of their beliefs, in much the same way as the Christian thinker to-day seeks to discover a philosophical basis for his faith. It was taught in the synagogue that the whole world would some day submit to God, as Israel worshiped him now. But what was involved in this future Kingship? How would it come to be realized? The conclusion forced itself on thoughtful men as they reflected on the future age that God himself must intervene and break up the present order before he could create a new one. Apocalyptic merely sets forth, in fuller and more vivid detail, what was assumed in the more sober teaching of the Rabbis. If the world now lying in wickedness was to turn to the true God there must first be some great upheaval. The existing order must disappear and give place to a new and better one. And if the apocalyptic

hope is implicit in that of the synagogue it is no less true that the apocalypticists, with all their wild speculations, hold fast to the central idea of the Rabbis. For them, too, the Kingdom of God is that condition of things when the whole world will know and obey the one God.

(5) *Conclusion*

Jesus, then, fell heir to a conception which had passed through a long development in the religion of Israel. At the beginning we have the crude Semitic belief that the divinity of the tribe was at the same time its king; at the end we arrive at the magnificent hope of a new age coming, when God alone will reign over a regenerated world. This development was partly due to the mingling with Hebrew religion of foreign streams of thought, and especially of the speculations which had come in from Persia. It was due still more to the unfolding of great ideas which had always been implicit in Hebrew religion itself. Jahveh the King of the tribe was also the God of righteousness. Since he maintained the moral law he must be Governor of the world and its Creator. He could be trusted to overcome the powers of evil and bring all things at last into harmony with his

will. It was not by any accident that Jesus, when he came forward with his message, chose out from the whole body of the ancient teaching this idea of the Kingdom of God. The more we study the religion of Israel, in the Old Testament and in the later literature, the more we realize that this was its vital idea. Everything else had its root in the confidence that God is reigning and will at last put all things under his feet.

So the hope of the Kingdom had come to Jesus as his most precious inheritance from the old religion. He separated it from all that was merely Jewish and laid bare the deeper meanings involved in it. He brought it into relation to his own knowledge of God and his new conception of the purpose of man's life. Through Jesus men learned to understand the hope in its full significance. It was linked henceforward not merely with the highest beliefs of Israel but with all the ideals and aspirations of mankind.

CHAPTER II

THE KINGDOM IN THE TEACHING OF JESUS

(1) Jesus' Use of the Conception

JESUS proclaimed the Kingdom of God, and we might have expected that whatever was obscure in his message his followers would at least understand its central theme. Yet almost from the first we find them uncertain as to what he meant. Our Gospels are full of sayings and parables about the Kingdom of God. We are told what it is like, how it will be manifested, who will inherit it, on what conditions it will be entered. But when all this has been learnt we are still left inquiring, "What is the Kingdom?" It is evident that the evangelists themselves have only a confused idea as to how this question should be answered.

The confusion may be accounted for in several ways. For one thing, Jesus' conception was entangled with Jewish beliefs which in the later age, and especially when the mission had been transplanted to

Gentile soil, had in great measure become unintelligible. Again, the church had sprung into being after Jesus' death through a faith that centered in his own Person. The questions that occupied it had all some reference to his own nature and significance. Who was he? In what sense had he claimed to be the Messiah? Why had he died on the Cross? What was the meaning of his Resurrection? This interest directed to Jesus himself threw his teaching into the shadow. Once more, and here we may discover the chief reason, the conception of the Kingdom was a many-sided one, which by its nature could not be summed up in a single formula. We have seen that even in its earlier history it had gathered into itself all the ideas that lay deepest in Jewish religion. Jesus had now filled it with a new wealth of meaning, and the church was careful not to restrict his message by any fixed definition. It allowed room for many interpretations, widely differing from each other but all of them faithful to the essential thought of Jesus.

This intrinsic largeness of the conception must be borne in mind when we set ourselves to examine the Gospel teaching. Modern inquiry, less wise in this respect than the early church, has fettered itself by the assumption that Jesus had in his mind a single

clear-cut idea. When his various sayings on the Kingdom appear to be in any manner inconsistent they are forced into agreement by doubtful critical devices. It is taken for granted that he kept before him a more or less rigid scheme, and that everything must be so explained as to fit in with it exactly. One thinks, for instance, of the questions which have bulked so largely in the modern discussion. Did Jesus think of the Kingdom as present or future? Did he expect it to come gradually or by way of sudden catastrophe? Did he contemplate a dramatic outward event or an inward condition? Did he look for the Kingdom to be realized on this earth or in some invisible world? These questions are all legitimate, and we shall have to consider them; but it may be said at once that none of them admits of a simple answer on one side or another. So to answer them betrays a misunderstanding of the whole nature of Jesus' thought. He worked with forms taken over from Jewish tradition, and our knowledge of what they meant for Judaism is always of value for our understanding of his purpose. But he was not interested in the forms for their own sake, and the study of their historical import will only carry us a little way. He used them to express his own conception

of God and of the ultimate meaning of man's life. His view of the Kingdom is not in the last resort to be determined by careful comparison of passages in apocalyptic and Rabbinical literature, but in the light of the great ideas which pervade his own teaching. While he took over a traditional hope he recast it, informing it with those convictions which had come to him out of his own experience of God. In a real sense the idea of the Kingdom, though an ancient one, is original with Jesus. It is the given idea in the light of which all his own teaching must be understood, and yet, from another point of view, it must itself be explained from the new context into which he brought it. The rule holds good of all great teachers that the idea which they receive, and which they perhaps imagine themselves to be merely expounding, becomes in their minds a different one. Plato took over his terms from Anaxagoras and Parmenides and the Eleatics, but each of them becomes in his hands a Platonic term, expressive not of what men thought before him but of his own peculiar outlook. It is even more true of Jesus that none of his ideas can be understood from its parallels in ordinary Judaism. All that was given him was woven in with his own thought and

must be interpreted in the light of it. This is true, above all, of his main conception of the Kingdom of God.

So it will be well to remind ourselves, in the first place, of some of the purposes to which he turns this conception in the course of his teaching. (1) He constantly brings it forward as the inspiring hope which must lie behind all action. Since the Kingdom is so near, men must prepare for it. In the thought of it they are to find energy for all service to God and to their fellow men. The conviction that the Kingdom is near is to lift men above themselves and fill them with a new power. They can now dare and achieve what seemed impossible. (2) As they receive power, so also they find support and consolation. The poor, the oppressed, the afflicted can bear up patiently, knowing that the present conditions will be only for a little while. In the confidence that God will soon establish his Kingdom men can put their trust in God. They can feel that even now, although he seems forgetful, he cares for them and is directing the world. (3) The Kingdom is for Jesus the criterion of all values. It is from this point of view that the hope of it may be said to determine all his ethical teaching. He has his mind fixed

always on what will be when the Kingdom comes. What things will then be worth possessing? What type of character will be honored? What sort of conduct will God require? In the present age it is the powerful, the earthly minded, the self-seeking who are exalted; but this age is hastening to its end and the truly wise will conform themselves to those new demands which will hold good in the Kingdom. They will bring everything to the test of how it will appear then, when the present values will have lost their meaning. (4) The Kingdom is a reward on which men must set their hearts. It is often objected that so much is made in Jesus' teaching of this motive of reward. Ought not the service of God to be disinterested? Is there any essential difference between seeking an earthly reward and aiming at a greater one hereafter? But when Jesus spoke, in the religious language of his time, of "reward" he meant outcome or fruition. The value of anything is to be measured by its result, and the result of moral obedience is the attainment of the Kingdom. Men are to realize that in doing the will of God they will obtain the supreme good. (5) Above all, the Kingdom is for Jesus the fulfillment of the divine purpose. Like every teacher who has reflected deeply on human

life and on the world around him he was conscious of an end toward which all things are working. He believed that this end for which the world exists is the Kingdom of God. In the light of what will then be he sought the meaning of what is now. It is here that we can discern one of the best-marked differences between his outlook and that of the Jewish apocalypticists. Their attitude is always that the present world is at the mercy of blind error. No meaning need be sought in it, and it will be simply blotted out to make room for the new age in which God will reign. Jesus looks to the new age to explain the present one. Since the reign of God is coming all that happens must have some relation to it and must be leading toward it. Knowing how God will manifest himself in the future we can perceive how he is working now, amidst all the seeming confusion.

Thus everything in Jesus' thought is connected with his idea of the Kingdom. This is the key at once to his ethic, to his theology, to his social teaching, to his inward religion. On the other hand those various aspects of his thought all illuminate his idea of the Kingdom. In the effort to understand it we must never lose sight of this interaction between the

conception itself and the manifold relations in which he viewed it.

(2) *The Apocalyptic Element*

There can be no reasonable doubt that Jesus started from the hope of the Kingdom as it was understood by the Jewish people in his time. He takes for granted that the term he uses will be intelligible to everyone. All were looking for the Kingdom, and he assured them that it was now close at hand. It is certain, too, that he attached his message to that of John the Baptist. John had awakened an eager expectation, and when Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom in the very words which John had made familiar he must have meant the same thing as his predecessor. John had brought tidings of the Kingdom, and here was one who confirmed and amplified the good news.

Now there can be little question as to what John had in mind when he spoke of the Kingdom of God. We know from the fragments of his preaching which have been preserved to us that he announced a crisis, now imminent, when God would hold a judgment and separate his people from the wicked. He declared that this approaching crisis would usher in

the Kingdom of God, and called on men to repent, so that they might stand in the Judgment and have a place allotted to them in the Kingdom. On those who repented he bestowed Baptism, as a seal of their acceptance by God. According to the Gospel accounts John declared that he himself would presently be followed by the Messiah, and because of this element in his message he was claimed by the church as the forerunner of Jesus. But it seems evident that the Messiah whom he contemplated was a dread, supernatural being whose one function was judgment. In any case the reference to the Messiah was incidental to the main announcement of the Kingdom of God.

From all this we can gather that John connected his message with that hope of the new age which had been developed, on the basis of prophecy, by the apocalyptic teachers. He has often been classed with those teachers as we know them from the surviving literature, and it may be granted that he is at one with them in his general conception of the future. But from this it cannot be inferred that he took over the complex eschatology of the apocalyptic books, or had much acquaintance with it. A great deal of confusion would be removed if we ceased to

regard a certain group of ideas as peculiar to one eccentric type of Jewish thought. The truth is, as has been indicated already, that the main positions adopted in the apocalyptic writings were common property. Those anticipations of a crisis, a judgment, a new supernatural order suddenly brought in by a divine act, had their place in the ordinary synagogue teaching.

What we call "apocalyptic," as if it were a well-defined type of thought by itself, was nothing but a normal aspect of Jewish belief. For all that he taught about the coming age John had no need to resort to out-of-the-way speculations. So far as we can gather there was nothing recondite in his scheme. He confined himself to those broad ideas about the future which were entertained, as a matter of course, by all pious Jews. Not only so, but it may be inferred from the whole tenor of his teaching that the apocalyptic interest was secondary to him. Of the nearness of the Kingdom he was fully convinced, and he proclaimed it with a burning intensity. But his chief concern was with the moral reformation which in view of the approaching crisis was urgently necessary. He dwelt on the thought of the Kingdom in order to give momentum to his moral appeal. We

know that for the people John was a prophet, and in this aspect he is always regarded in the New Testament. His true place in the history of religion is not with the apocalypticists but with the prophets. Because of its intimate relation to that of John it has often been argued, by modern writers, that the message of Jesus must be construed in a purely apocalyptic sense. But the truth is that John provides the best evidence against this construction. The interest of John was in righteousness. He threw all the emphasis on the "change of mind" which men must undergo if they would be accepted in the Judgment. And this, we may surely believe, was no less true of Jesus. John was his forerunner for this very reason—that he took up the current apocalyptic hope and made it the motive to "repentance."

The message of Jesus, then, attached itself to a conception which was broadly similar to that of John. The Kingdom of which he spoke was the new age, presently to break in, when God would assert his sovereignty. A generation ago, when the importance of the apocalyptic literature was first recognized, this side of his thought was magnified, almost to the exclusion of every other. It was maintained that all the older interpretations must now be set aside.

Jesus was an apocalyptic enthusiast, and all our estimates of his purpose must be controlled by this primary fact. Such a one-sided view is no longer possible. We have grown aware, for one thing, that much of the apocalyptic color of the Gospels is due not to Jesus but to the later church. At the time when our Gospels were written it was believed that Jesus had departed in order to return at any moment in his Messianic glory to bring in the Kingdom. In this mood of tense expectation the Christian teachers could not but fasten on everything in Jesus' words that seemed to countenance their hopes. Not only did they heighten the apocalyptic element in his own thought but they ascribed to him not a few utterances of Jewish apocalyptists and of those Christian prophets to whom the Spirit had revealed the wonders of the future. The 13th chapter of Mark, with its parallels in Matthew and Luke, is the one passage in which the coming crisis is discussed in detail, and it seems mainly to be composed of alien material, with a few authentic sayings as a nucleus.

Nearly all the apocalyptic references in the Gospels need to be carefully scrutinized. Even when they may be accepted as genuine we have always to reckon with the possibility that something has been added

or suggested in the interest of the later hope. When all this doubtful material has been allowed for and we take only those words on the future which may safely be attributed to Jesus himself, it is still misleading to call them "apocalyptic." This term is apt to imply that whole system of visionary ideas which we find in the book of Enoch and the other writings. There is a sound instinct behind the aversion with which many people still regard the apocalyptic reading of the Gospels. They rightly feel that Jesus, however we must explain him, was not a fanatical dreamer. He was too much in earnest, too much alive to the supreme issues of life, to ally himself with any variety of freak religion. But the whole question assumes a different character when once we realize that his so-called apocalyptic was nothing else than the ordinary Jewish belief of his time. He was no more apocalyptic than the great Rabbis, whose sobriety of temper has never been disputed. Undoubtedly there was much in his teaching which appeared wild and dangerous, so much so that the religious leaders were bent, almost from the outset, on removing him. But it was not his hopes of the Kingdom which caused this misgiving. All his hearers shared, more or less consciously, in the same

hopes. He held them, as we can gather from many indications, in a far less extravagant form than most of the orthodox teachers. Again and again some question was put to him which was freely debated in the Rabbinical schools, and he refused to answer it. He pretended to no occult knowledge of the invisible world. He practiced none of the "observation" which tried to fix the precise date and manner of the coming of the Kingdom. So far from posing as an apocalyptic seer he disappointed the mass of his hearers by his deliberate silence as to the future.

Nevertheless, for the very reason that he started from the common presuppositions, he thought of the Kingdom in the apocalyptic manner as the new age, in which the whole order of the world would be changed. Sometimes he refers to it explicitly as "the age to come," in contrast to the present age. He thinks of it as preceded by a crisis and a Judgment. He dwells on the completeness of the coming change, when the first will be last and the last first. It must be noted, too, that the apocalyptic strain is not confined to isolated sayings, which may be disposed of by critical ingenuity. When the teaching is closely examined we can perceive that behind it everywhere there is the thought of a new supernatural

order. In the Sermon on the Mount, for instance, there is nothing that can be called directly apocalyptic. Yet the discourse opens with the Beatitudes, which contrast the conditions of the present with those of the future. All through the chapters that follow it is assumed that men must break with the old requirements and submit to a new law, which is that of the coming age. This is the underlying motive of all the sayings which are woven together in this summary of the teaching of Jesus.

But while he shared in the prevailing hope he took nothing to do with apocalyptic speculations for their own sake. Were there few that would be saved? ¹ What would become of earthly relations in the new life? ² How would honors and privileges be distributed? ³ In questions of this kind which bulked so largely in apocalyptic discussion he had no interest. It was enough for him to know that a new age was coming in which all things would be different. Even the time of the approaching crisis did not much concern him. He declared that it was near, but never tried, as prophets have usually done, to fix the hour. The day he looked for has now tarried

¹ Lk. 13:23.

² Mk. 12:18ff.

³ Mk. 9:36; 10:37f.

for two thousand years, and his whole message, we are sometimes assured, was based on an illusion. But one may dare to affirm that even if he could have foreseen the long delay he would not have been greatly disturbed.¹ The time of the Kingdom was one of those speculations which he left alone. All that mattered was the grand fact that the Kingdom was coming, and that God would establish it in his own time.

The apocalyptic element in the teaching cannot, indeed, be set aside as mere imagery, a sort of pictorial or parabolic language which is meant to convey spiritual truth. Jesus believed that God would interpose in some marvelous way and change the world's order. He expected a literal Judgment by which God's people would be set apart for eternal life. All this belonged to the current idea of the Kingdom as set forth in scripture, and he never thought of questioning it. But as he looked forward to the Kingdom his mind was intent not on its external aspects but on the change it would involve in all moral and spiritual conditions. In that coming age God would reign. His will alone would prevail. Men would be wrought into full harmony with his

will and would obey it gladly and spontaneously. This was the real significance which the hope of the Kingdom had for Jesus. His aim was to understand God's perfect will, but in the world as it is now it can only be dimly discerned. Under the earthly limitations it cannot operate freely. It has to adapt itself to men's weakness and ignorance; it has to compromise with all the material hindrances which stand in the way of its fulfillment. It must be thought of apart from these obstructions before it can be rightly apprehended. How Jesus did this may be illustrated by one passage, which at first sight may seem to have little bearing on his idea of the Kingdom. When he was questioned on the Mosaic law of marriage he declared that it had been so framed "because of the hardness of men's hearts." "Human nature had so degenerated that nothing was possible but an imperfect law, and to ascertain the true law of marriage it is necessary to go back to "the beginning." In Eden, when man and woman were still as God had created them, the bond of marriage was complete and indissoluble, and such, in the divine intention, it must always be. May we not say that in his teaching on the Kingdom the mind of Jesus

⁴ Mk. 10:5.

proceeds by the same method? He transports himself out of the present, in which the higher will strives vainly to assert itself in the face of earthly resistance, into the future. He conceives of a time when man's life is placed amidst perfect conditions, when God is known as an ever-present reality. For Jesus this coming age was no imagination. The hope of it had always been vital to his religion, and he never doubted that ere long it would be realized. So in his endeavor to know the will of God he turned from the confusion of the present to the Kingdom that was at hand. For others it was the age when Israel would be exalted, an age of universal happiness and peace. For Jesus it was in very truth the reign of God, who would at last subject all things entirely to his will. In the light of those future conditions when God's will would be fully manifest he sought to interpret it and make it effective now. Thus the Kingdom becomes for him another name for the will of God. He thinks of it in apocalyptic fashion as the new age in which all things will be marvelously transformed. But the transformation will consist above all in this—that the will of God will henceforth be the sole law. "*Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth.*"

(3) The Kingdom as Present and Future

When we thus understand Jesus' attitude to the traditional hope it is not difficult to answer the two crucial questions on which the modern discussion has so largely turned. (1) Did he conceive of the Kingdom as future, or as already, in some manner beginning? For Jewish thought the future conception was certainly the characteristic one. It is granted that God has been always King and that his servants even now can "take on themselves the yoke of the Kingdom." Yet his reign in the proper sense lies in the future. The world's history falls into two ages, that which now is and that which is to come, and between them will be the crisis in which the whole existing order will disappear. It might seem from much in Jesus' teaching as if he had broken with this apocalyptic view. He sees in his miracles the sign that "the Kingdom of God is come unto you." He beholds in a vision Satan falling from his throne as prince of this world. He compares the Kingdom to seed—to the mustard seed which grows into a spreading tree, to the grain that keeps springing up while men sleep. In such sayings and parables he seems to describe himself as the sower of a seed

which contains in itself the Kingdom. So when he put forward his Messianic claim he apparently thought of himself as already Messiah, and engaged in his destined task of inaugurating the Kingdom. The view of the church has always been that the Kingdom had its dawn in his appearance on earth, and this view may seem to be borne out by his own sayings. Yet it cannot be denied that his teaching as a whole points to the future. He sets out with the proclamation "The Kingdom is at hand"—not yet in being but shortly to come. He is ever contrasting the conditions which now are with those that will be. He describes the coming signs by which men will know that the Kingdom is near, and assumes that it cannot reveal itself until the old order disappears. He bids his disciples pray for the Kingdom as for something that is still in the distance. The whole significance of the Kingdom is made to consist in its futurity. It lies in front of us as the hope that inspires us, the goal of our striving, the divine reality which will at last displace the earthly shadows.

How are we to reconcile this seeming contradiction in Jesus' teaching? It is possible to argue that when he regards the Kingdom as present he merely de-

clares, in a vivid, dramatic manner, that it is just imminent. "I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven"; that is, Satan is as good as fallen, the reign of God is immediately at hand. Or all those passages in which the Kingdom is supposed to be present may be set down to later reflection. We know that from an early time it was made identical with the church, and a confusion of this kind may have obscured the record of Jesus' own sayings. Such theories, however, are uncalled for. There is no reason why Jesus should not have thought of the Kingdom both as present and future. It was so regarded in prophecy and apocalyptic; why should not Jesus conceive of it in like manner? Far more than the earlier teachers he was conscious of its present reality, for the whole drift of his thought is to merge the coming Kingdom in the sovereign will of God. Nothing, moreover, is more characteristic of his religion than his trust in God's providence. He is poles asunder from the ordinary apocalyptic view that God for the time being has withdrawn himself and has allowed the evil powers to usurp his place. There can be no condition of things in which God is not reigning. He feeds the sparrows and clothes the field flowers. He watches over his

children and they are to find peace and security in the knowledge of his controlling will. With this intense realization of God as a living and all-sustaining presence it was impossible for Jesus to see the Kingdom as wholly in the future. Against such a reading of his thought we have to set not merely a few stray utterances but all the substance of his teaching and the motives which governed his own life. God's Kingdom is coming; it is also here. These ideas lie side by side in the mind of Jesus, and so far from being contradictory they must be taken together before we can rightly grasp the meaning of either of them. The future consummation will gather up and make manifest what has always been; the present is full of significance because it points forward to what shall be. It is the blending of these two lines of thought which gives distinctive character to the sayings of Jesus.

(2) So with the other debated question as to whether the Kingdom is to burst in suddenly and miraculously or is to dawn gradually and grow from more to more. It is certain that the former view was the traditional one. The only notable exception to it is in the book of Jubilees, written at the time when Palestine had just regained its independence

and the rule of the Maccabæan kings had opened under happy auspices. The author anticipates that the new prosperity will continue and steadily increase, until finally the consummation will arrive of its own accord. But this hope, born of unique conditions, stands alone, and the Kingdom, according to the normal view is to break in suddenly by God's immediate act. This apocalyptic forecast seems also to be assumed in the Rabbinical literature. God will at last be acknowledged by all nations because he will vindicate his power with a mighty hand. As he intervened at the time of the Exodus and the Assyrian invasion so he will destroy all heathen domination and bend the world to his will. Jesus inherited these conceptions. Ever and again in his teaching he takes for granted that the Kingdom will come catastrophically. In a moment, when men are never thinking of it, the crisis will be upon them. It is compared to the lightning, or to the flood of Noah which came without warning. It will overwhelm men and separate them while they are working in the field or grinding at the mill. In view of this suddenness of the great change Jesus enjoins the duty of constant watchfulness. Several of his most impressive parables turn on the thought that the

true disciple must be always ready, lest he may be taken unaware.

No doubt in this aspect of the teaching we must allow for the reading back into the record of that hope of the Parousia which was still powerful when our Gospels were written; but the references to an instant coming of the Kingdom are so frequent and so integral to the message as a whole that they cannot be eliminated. Yet here, as in the other conception, we have to recognize a double strain in Jesus' thinking. Most notably in those parables of the seed, already mentioned, he seems to contemplate a gradual coming of the Kingdom. It must indeed be remembered that the metaphor of seed did not have the same import for the ancient mind that we find in it now. The growth of a seed stood not so much for development as for mystery. A seed cast into the ground and passing through apparent death into larger life was the typical example of divine action. So it is regarded by Paul and John, and the crowning disclosure at the Eleusinian Mysteries was conveyed through the exhibition of a seed. Jesus, it is certain, never anticipated a Kingdom which would mature through an age-long process. He takes his example not from the acorn but the mustard seed,

which rushes up in the course of a single season into an overshadowing tree. None the less the metaphor, however we understand it, signifies a growth. For that part, even in those sayings where he dwells explicitly on the suddenness of the crisis, Jesus makes room for preliminary signs. He points to his own teaching and miracles as among these signs of the Kingdom. If the closing apocalyptic discourse is in any degree authentic he allowed for a drama, long drawn out, which would lead up to the great day. Although at last it will come all in a moment it will not take the world altogether by surprise.

Thus it may be inferred that the sudden coming of the Kingdom was not an essential element of Jesus' thought. He took over the traditional hope, which assumed that the change would be brought about by way of catastrophe; but this belonged to the framework which had been given him. For himself it mattered little whether God would fulfill his purpose by a gradual process or by a momentary act. Indeed with his new conception of the Kingdom as consisting above all in the full acceptance of the will of God he could not think of it as appearing in a single flash. Without the inward change the

outward one would mean nothing, and the growth of a new will in men would necessarily be slow and difficult. This was fully perceived by Jesus when he turned his back on all swift, spectacular methods of forcing the Kingdom, and gave himself to the thankless task of teaching. Only spiritual action could effect a spiritual change. In one respect only can we regard the sudden coming of the Kingdom as bound up with an essential interest in Jesus' thought. Even in apocalyptic the suddenness is of no value for its own sake. Emphasis is laid on it because it suggests immediate divine action. In all times the sudden and the supernatural have been closely associated in men's minds. That which happens at once, before ordinary forces have had time to operate, can apparently have no other cause than the finger of God. Thus in apocalyptic the change was conceived as instantaneous, not only because a catastrophe quite unlooked for was impressive to the imagination, but because it meant that God himself had put forth his power.

It is for this reason that Jesus, too, insists on the apocalyptic idea. He thinks of the Kingdom as coming by the direct act of God; this is a cardinal ele-

ment in his whole conception. In much of our modern religion it is laid down as a first principle that the world cannot change to something better except by the effort of men themselves. We speak of "building up the Kingdom" by earnest Christian work; we think of it as the far-off goal to be attained through growing knowledge, better legislation, strengthening of human brotherhood. It will emerge at last like a coral island from the accumulated labor of unnumbered faithful lives. This conception of a Kingdom which will owe its being to man's own endeavor is sometimes regarded as the distinctive gain of our modern Christianity. We contrast it, self-complacently, with the old belief that men must wait on God for some marvelous fulfillment of his will. What was this faith but the excuse for indolence or timidity? The will of God cannot fulfill itself until men bestir themselves and fulfill it for him. Yet there can be no question that the older attitude, however we choose to describe it, was that of Jesus. The Kingdom to which he looked forward was God's Kingdom; men are powerless to bring it into being. They can wait for it, they can make the world ready to receive it, there must be no limit to the labor and fidelity with which they

perform this work of preparation. Yet the Kingdom is of God and must be given directly from God.

This belief lies at the very heart of Jesus' message. He insists on watchfulness and faithful stewardship and declares that no sacrifice can be too great for the sake of the Kingdom. But he finds the very motive for all human effort in the knowledge that behind us there is a divine power on which we can rely and which is certain in the end to accomplish its purpose. So the belief that the Kingdom will break in suddenly may be discounted, as part of the traditional hope; but in so far as this suddenness implies the action of God himself we have to reckon with an idea which belongs to the very substance of Jesus' thought. It would perhaps be well if our religion could recover this idea which it claims to have outgrown. The faith that behind our own poor effort there is a divine victorious power has never been a hindrance to human endeavor. All the greatest work has been done in the strength of it, and apart from it our best-meant activities will come to little. Christianity cannot be separated from the belief that God himself must bring in his Kingdom. The apocalyptic forms have lost their meaning, but

the truth expressed by them still lies at the very roots of our religion.

(4) The Kingdom as the Spiritual Order

Jesus set out from the hope of the Kingdom as it had come to him through his Jewish inheritance. He believed that a crisis was near in which God would overthrow all hostile powers, and that it would be followed by a new age, when the present order would give place to a higher one. He thinks of this new order primarily in its moral aspects. Under those perfect conditions which will prevail in the Kingdom the will of God will be perfectly realized. The coming of the Kingdom means the fulfillment of the will of God. At the same time the idea of a higher order of existence, over against the earthly one, plays a very real part in Jesus' thought. He does not formulate it in philosophical or mystical language, but everywhere in the background of his teaching we are conscious of a profound sense that this world is transient and unreal and that man's true interest lies elsewhere. Earthly things have meaning only in so far as through them we can lay hold of that which is eternal. It is all-important to recognize that although the ethical counts for so much in Jesus'

teaching he does not value it for its own sake. The end of right living is to gain the Kingdom. There is a higher world to which men as God's children belong, and by way of righteousness they can obtain their part in it. A day is coming when the world of reality will be revealed, and even now we can in some measure apprehend it and thereby attain to true life. These two aspects of the Kingdom as at once the moral order and the higher spiritual order are inseparable in Jesus' thought, and the denial of one or the other of them has been the cause of endless confusion. Christianity has been presented sometimes as a system of worship and sacrament by which we are brought into relation to an invisible world. Sometimes the stress has been laid exclusively on moral requirements, so that the religion becomes little more than a superior code of ethics.

In old days it was the former presentation which held the field. The church declared that through Christ men were lifted, even in this life, to a higher plane of existence. They had fellowship with saints and angels and were admitted to a world of mystery which lies all around us though it is hidden by the earthly veil. All the resources of architecture and music and solemn ritual were called in to awaken

the sense of a divine order, and the purely moral demands were too often thrust into the background. The true Christian attitude was that of "contempt of the world." Men deliberately turned away from practical duties in order to devote themselves wholly to worship and contemplation and so aspire to the beatific vision which was the highest prize of the Christian life. In our time it is the other conception in which we are wont to recognize the true purpose of Jesus. He came to enforce the supreme value of the ethical. As the child of a religious age he was compelled to view ethics in the light of religion and combined his moral teaching with a strange theory, taken over from current tradition, about the Kingdom of God. But all this belonged to the wrappings of his thought. What really concerned him was the virtuous life, the creation of a better society on the ground of human brotherhood. This exclusive emphasis on the ethical is hailed as a recovery of the true gospel. Yet the other conception is no less essentially bound up with Jesus' teaching. As soon as we try to explain the ethical sayings we find that he is viewing man's life in its larger, spiritual relations. By moral obedience men are to seek the Kingdom of God, and the Kingdom does not consist

merely in the approval of conscience, or a more upright character, or the improvement of human society. By service of God you reach out beyond the earthly things, you throw in your lot with a higher supernatural order.

In that medieval conception which we sometimes boast of having left behind us there is a great truth, and one which certainly had its place in the mind of Jesus. There can be no religion which is not, in some manner, sacramental. The sense of a higher reality, reflected in things visible, is the very basis of man's spiritual life. It supplies the impulse to all art and poetry, and manifests itself above all in religion. The religious mood might almost be defined as that in which we become conscious, amidst earthly appearances, of something beyond. This mood was ever present with Jesus, and his aim was to impress on men, as he felt it himself, the nearness and reality of the invisible world. He called it the Kingdom of God, and we miss the full scope of his conception when we look solely to its ethical bearings. In his idea of the Kingdom he comprehended everything that belongs to man's higher life. To be sure he took nothing to do with those æsthetic and philosophical interests which counted for so much in the

contemporary Pagan world; most likely he was ignorant of them. It has often been maintained that under the influence of his gospel men lost their feeling for the beauty and mystery around them, and only recovered it when they found their way back to the Pagan ideals. But that narrowing of the spiritual outlook which we associate with the dark ages was not due to Jesus. On the contrary it was through him, in the last resort, that men became clearly aware of a higher order which gives meaning and glory to the earthly one.

All that is noblest in the thought and imagination of the Christian centuries has been reflected from his vision of the Kingdom of God. To think of his message as otherworldly in the sense that it emptied this world of all value is to miss its purpose altogether. But while he included all higher reality in his idea of the Kingdom he laid the chief stress on the moral demand. The reign of God as he conceived it was the fulfillment of the will of God. Love, justice, goodness are of God's very nature, and in the new world of the future, whatever may be its outward form, these things must be supreme. So for Jesus the Kingdom has always the two aspects. It is at once the higher, invisible order and the moral

law in its perfect operation. The difficulty in our religion has always been to grasp these two ideas together. As a rule when they are combined at all the link between them is some arbitrary, artificial one. We think of Christianity as consisting, on the one hand, of certain ethical requirements, on the other, of certain beliefs about the unseen world. Why these two elements should be united we cannot say, and try to simplify our faith by leaving one or the other of them out of sight. But in the thought of Jesus they are fused together, so that we can hardly tell which of them he considers primary. We are to do God's will in order to have part in his Kingdom: we are to seek after the Kingdom that we may have power to do God's will. To many it has appeared as if the message of Jesus suffers from an inward contradiction, due to those inherited beliefs from which he started. He held to the apocalyptic hope of the new age: he also perceived the fundamental need for a changed will. Unconscious that these two things were different in their nature and could not be bound together, he insisted on both of them, with the result that his teaching, as soon as we examine it, falls apart.

But it is evident that in his mind there was no

sense of incongruity. He had apprehended the Kingdom as one and the same in all its aspects. By doing the will of God men also find entrance into the higher world of unseen reality.

(5) Entrance into the Kingdom

The phrase "to enter the Kingdom" is always recurring in the Gospels, and it goes back, like so much else, to apocalyptic tradition. At the end of the present age God is to hold a Judgment. Those who are found unworthy will be thrust aside, while those whom God approves will be admitted, as through a door, into the new life. But with Jesus this mode of thinking becomes little more than figurative. Since the Kingdom is not only future but has a real beginning in the present, men can enter it here and now. Most of Jesus' teaching revolves around the question, "How is this entrance possible?"

It belongs to the essence of the message that everything depends on one great decision. The one thing necessary is to surrender one's self to the will of God, and all else will follow of its own accord. The will that has become one with God's will can henceforth be trusted to take the right path in all those moral

complexities which had to be carefully mapped out under the old law. In many sayings Jesus dwells on the tremendous difficulty of that first step. "How hard it is to enter the Kingdom of God." "Strait is the gate and narrow the path that leadeth unto life." "Many are called and few chosen." In other sayings he declares that entrance is easy. All are invited and have only to come. When the prodigal returns to his father he is sure at once of a welcome. Nothing is required but to do one easy thing; yet this is precisely the thing that men will not and cannot do. They are so entangled in old habits, so darkened by the deceptions of this world, that they cannot come out into the light. Here we are confronted, not with some peculiar contradiction in Jesus' teaching, but with the eternal paradox in religion—that the easiest thing should also be the most difficult.

Jesus dwells, therefore, on the conditions on which the Kingdom may be entered. (1) The first, which includes in itself all the others, is repentance. This word was adopted from John the Baptist, who had himself taken it from the prophets; but into the old word Jesus put a new and far-reaching import. All that John had required was a mending of one's ways, by which rich men would become more gen-

erous, tax-gatherers would deal justly, soldiers would refrain from robbery. Jesus demanded literally a "change of mind." Men must adopt a new attitude to life and judge all things by new standards. Outward reform means nothing, and is more rightly to be called "hypocrisy," unless it proceeds from this radical inward change.

(2) Repentance involves the child-like spirit; "unless ye repent and become like little children." It had already been recognized by Socrates and other sages that a man can know nothing until he is clearly aware of his ignorance. This, in part, was the meaning of Jesus, but his thought goes very much farther. He requires, for one thing, that men should free themselves of custom and prejudice, and look at the world with fresh eyes, as if they saw everything for the first time. Not only so, but they must have the open, receptive heart. All things that are worth having are given us by God, and we miss them by our pride and self-satisfaction. The Kingdom is *given* us, and we cannot have it unless we throw ourselves with an entire submissiveness on God. "Except a man receive the Kingdom as a little child he cannot enter therein."

(3) Once more, and this also is another aspect of

the great demand for repentance, we must be ready to surrender all earthly interests and possessions. Sometimes this requirement is pressed by Jesus in its literal form, but only on those whom he has called to his immediate service. It was far from his intention to start a fanatical, mendicant movement which involved a complete separation from the world. Most of his followers, as we can gather from the Gospels, remained at their old occupations, and among them were people of some wealth, who were not called on to part with all that they possessed. Yet in its substance the demand was meant to be universal. Renunciation in some form must always be the very corner stone of such a life as Jesus required. Those only can share in the new order who have inwardly detached themselves from the old.

Such are the conditions with which men must themselves comply, but the Kingdom is of God, and all that men can do is preliminary to God's own act. This is described by Jesus as "forgiveness". Those only can enter the Kingdom whose sins have been forgiven by God. We come here to a side of Jesus' teaching which is significant, perhaps, above all others.

The conception of sin was peculiar to Hebrew reli-

gion—so much so that no word could be found in other languages to convey its full meaning. This was because the idea of God, in Hebrew religion, was inseparable from that of righteousness. That feeling of awe which elsewhere attached itself to holy places and objects was connected, for the Hebrew mind, with the moral law. Wrongdoing took on the character of a sacrilege, a direct offense against the holiness of God. Jesus inherited this conception. He thought of sin as an injury done not merely to one's self and one's neighbor but to God himself. In the last resort God is the one great creditor with whom man has to reckon. There can be no real acquittal until he has canceled the debt.

According to the Law sin consisted in any breach of God's commandments, ritual as well as moral. Jesus laid the whole stress on moral offenses. "Not that which goeth in but that which cometh out defileth the man." Those only whose will has prompted them to evil deeds are properly to be accounted sinners. Not only so, but the true sins all spring from some want of love. The great attributes of God are love and mercy, and to show those qualities in your own life is to be like God; to act in the contrary spirit is to reject God. One of the

most profound and daring of Jesus' sayings is that addressed to the repentant woman: "Her sins which are many are forgiven, because she loved much." When love is present you are essentially right with God; you have kept your reverence for what is, in the deepest sense, divine. Without love you may be morally blameless, and yet the one quality that matters is absent from your life.

There is no trace in Jesus' teaching of any doctrine of original sin. He assumes that in everyone there is some natural good which may be touched and developed, and on this confidence he rests his whole appeal. Sin, as he regards it, proceeds not from a defect of nature but from a perversion of the will; this is what makes it sin. Yet he recognizes that all have yielded to the lower impulses and fallen away from God. Sin is inevitable in so far as men are born into the present age and are conformed, almost without their knowledge, to its modes of thought and action. All are in bondage to sin and must be delivered before they can enter into the Kingdom of God.

The church has held ever since the time of Paul, and probably before him, that this deliverance was effected by the death of Christ. It is possible that he

himself had applied to his coming death the prophecy of the Suffering Servant: "He was wounded for our transgressions,—the Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all." He seems undoubtedly to have thought of his death as in some manner instrumental to the coming of the Kingdom, and may have explained it, in the light of Old Testament prophecy, as the "ransom" which would set men free from the accumulated weight of sin. But in his teaching as we know it from the Gospels he thinks of sin as removed simply by forgiveness. God is infinitely gracious. He is like a generous king who out of sheer pity remits an enormous debt. He is like a father who runs to meet the returning prodigal. This willingness to forgive belongs to the very nature of God.

At this point, however, we come on one of the most characteristic and far-reaching of the ideas of Jesus. God will forgive sins, but only when men forgive each other. This thought is embodied in a number of striking utterances, and most notably in the Lord's Prayer. The other petitions are unconditional; all men have the right to ask for daily bread, protection, guidance. But in asking God for forgiveness you must be able to assure him that you have

forgiven, or in that moment forgive,⁵ your offending neighbor. What is the meaning of this insistence that those only who forgive will be forgiven?

It might seem at first as if God's forgiveness is a return for what we do ourselves; but this would be contrary to Jesus' whole thought of the gracious God, who bestows on us all that is best without our deserving. The idea implied is rather that the act of forgiving carries with it the divine forgiveness. God is willing to forgive, but we are kept apart from him by the loveless spirit in ourselves. We have nothing in common with God and he cannot approach us or help us. As soon as we exercise love in our own lives we participate in the forgiving will of God. In the doing of an unselfish deed there is always a glow of satisfaction, a sense of being liberated. Martyrs and patriots have sacrificed their lives with joy, assured that in giving they have received something priceless for themselves. Jesus would say that what they receive is God's forgiveness. It is not granted by way of reward for a good action, but is itself part of the action. Breaking with your own egoism you have made your will one with God's

⁵ In Matthew's version of the prayer the past is used ("have forgiven"); in Luke's, the present ("forgive").

will and his love, to which your heart was closed, takes full possession of you.

Thus it might almost be said that to exercise forgiveness is for Jesus the way of salvation. You must be forgiven by God before you can enter the Kingdom, and his forgiveness comes through your forgiving your fellow men. It seems a different gospel from that of Paul, but there is no real contradiction. For the will to forgive, so contrary to our own impulse, must be wakened in us by God; this the truth implicit in all the teaching of Jesus. Paul would say that the divine power which thus renews our will is given in the Cross. "Forgiving one another, as God through Christ has forgiven you."⁶ In these words of Paul we have the other side of the petition in the Lord's Prayer. God forgives us as we forgive each other, and we are enabled thus to forgive by the knowledge of God's forgiveness.

(6) The Kingdom and the Inward Life

In teaching the conditions for entrance into the Kingdom Jesus falls back on apocalyptic ideas. This mode of thought was not merely figurative. He conceives of a higher order from which we are divided

⁶ Eph. 4:32.

as by a barrier. The way by which we pass out of the earthly sphere into the heavenly one is that of repentance and renunciation and forgiveness of sins. Yet it is evident that these conditions do not merely secure some future good in a world entirely different from that which now is. Those whom God has forgiven and who wait on him with a child-like heart have secured some present good. The idea of a new order is blended with that of an inward disposition, and is hardly to be distinguished from it. A political thinker conceives of a state of government under which men will be free, and tries to forecast it, and confidently believes that some day it will come into being. Yet he is well aware that there is no need for waiting until that day arrives. If they will, men can be free already by following the light of their own reason and conscience. The one purpose of the future society is to realize in visible institutions this inward freedom. So for Jesus the age that is coming cannot be separated from the new life which begins now. In the last resort he is more concerned with this inward transformation than with the Kingdom itself.

We shall see that in the later development of his message the main emphasis was thrown on the

renewal of man's spiritual nature. The Fourth evangelist no longer speaks of the Kingdom of God but only of eternal life. The chief aim of the believer is for him the attainment of this higher life, which dwells in Christ's people as a present possession. When we look more closely into the Synoptic teaching we can see that the later interpretation had a real ground in Jesus' own thought.

Even in the traditional Jewish conception the Kingdom was associated with life. It was the age in which God would reign, and for Hebrew religion God was emphatically the living God. All who belonged to him or came within the circle of his presence shared in his life. This idea is finely brought out in a passage of the Wisdom of Solomon. "For God made not death, neither delighteth he when the wicked perish. For he made all things that they might have being, and the creative powers of the world are health-giving, and there is no poison of destruction in them. Hades has no dominion upon earth."⁷ This triumphant faith that since God is the living One, life is the primary law of his world found its complete expression in the hope of the Kingdom. In that coming age when God alone is

⁷ *Sapientia*, 1:13, 14.

King there will be fullness of life. Those who inherit the Kingdom will be set free from sorrow and disease and oppression, from all that now weighs on our life and confines it. They will be like plants restored to their native soil and climate—subject no more to the influences that have starved and shriveled them. In communion with the living God they will live. Jesus took up this conception inherent in the hope of the Kingdom and gave it new depth and import. A number of passages might be collected in which he makes "life," the supreme blessing of the Kingdom, a synonym for the Kingdom itself ("to enter into life," "this do and thou shalt live," "strait is the way that leads to life"). This was in keeping with the ordinary Jewish usage; but for traditional thought the coming life was little more than the present one, set free from its troubles and limitations. Jesus perceived that it must be another kind of life. In that new age men would be different in their moral being; their motives and desires would be changed; they would stand in a new relation to each other and to God. They may enter in the present on this higher life, and unless they have done so they can have little hope from the future. Those who have no part in the enduring spiritual inter-

ests are dead. Like the rich fool they possess nothing except in this passing world and go forth empty when their souls are required of them. Those who seek the will of God are alive already with the life of the Kingdom.

In one place Jesus is made to declare in so many words, "The Kingdom of God is within you."⁸ It would appear from the context as if the words should more properly be rendered "among you." Jesus is telling how the Kingdom will come suddenly and is already imminent. Men will be anxiously looking for it, doubtful if it will ever come, when lo, it is right in the midst of them. The other meaning, however, is not at all impossible. Approaches to it may be found even in the Rabbinical teaching, and it does not necessarily reflect a later mystical idea outside of the horizon of Jesus. He may well have declared that a man may enjoy in his own heart that life of the Kingdom which will be vouchsafed hereafter. The Kingdom is not a condition outside of us, into which we shall some day be transported, but exists within.

This sense of the inwardness of the Kingdom is not to be sought merely in explicit sayings. The

⁸ Lk. 17:21.

conviction is always present with Jesus, and may be clearly discerned underneath all his teaching, that the true joy of the Kingdom will consist in fellowship with God. Amidst the darkness and difficulty of this world God seems distant and forgetful, and we find it hard to trust him, and can only offer him an imperfect service. In the Kingdom we shall fully know him as Father; the will that is in us will be entirely one with the divine will; in this fellowship with God we shall find true life. The teaching is all inspired with the confidence that for this new condition of soul we do not need to wait for an indefinite future. We can live now as God's children. We can make the purpose of God our own. In this world of change and illusion we can have communion with the eternal God. Jesus does not conceive of the new life in the manner of Paul and John as springing out of a mystical indwelling of the divine nature. He remains faithful to that belief in the separateness of God and man which he had inherited from Hebrew religion. Yet in the last resort he has broken with the apocalyptic view and understands the Kingdom as a fact of the inward life. It consists in that fellowship with God which is the same now as it will be hereafter.

(7) The Kingdom and the New Righteousness

It is in this light that we must explain the ethical teaching. By far the greatest number of sayings are concerned with moral duties; and for many readers of the Gospels this has been a stumblingblock. They know of Jesus as the supreme religious teacher, but when they examine what he actually taught they seem to find nothing but a series of maxims on the right conduct of life. The maxims, no doubt, are true and beautiful, but what have they to do with religion? To some it has even appeared as if Jesus were impatient with religion as commonly understood. He saw his countrymen occupied with worship and ceremonial, intent on fostering a mere devotional piety, and all this impressed him as futile. He declared that the one thing that mattered was right living. The Samaritan or publican who *did* some practical deed of kindness was a better man than the priest or Pharisee who spent his whole life in so-called religious service. Many have here discovered the real purpose of the work of Jesus, which the church, almost from the beginning, has sedulously tried to conceal. He aimed at delivering men not merely from the burden of the Law but from

religion itself. He substituted for it a practical ethic, a social program. He recognized as his true disciples those who behave justly in all the business of life and promote the welfare of their neighbors. The more they do so out of pure uprightness and love, without any fanciful religious motives, the more they are faithful to the essential spirit of Jesus.

Now it is indeed true that he laid all the stress on action, and denied the worth of any belief or sentiment which did not have its outcome in action. This, however, is no reason for concluding that his place is among the great ethical teachers. It is not only men of religion who are prone to substitute theory for practice. Possibly it might be found that moral censors and agitators for social justice have been far more guilty of that hypocrisy which Jesus denounced. His aim was not to put an ethical creed in place of a religious one, but only to insist that in whatever manner they professed to serve God men should be utterly sincere. He attacked the Pharisees not because they were religious instead of moral, but because they made so much of morality and failed to live up to their pretensions. All their passion for justice and mercy resulted in nothing but empty words. For that part, it was unnecessary

for Jesus to come forward with an ethical gospel. In the religion of the time there was enough and to spare of moral sentiment, and countless excellent maxims have been culled from the Rabbinical teaching. The aim of Jesus was to transform sentiments into deeds. He set himself not so much to formulate a new ethic as to supply the power whereby men should act on what they already knew. The Sermon on the Mount is usually interpreted as a new exposition of moral duties, but the real purport of it is contained in the closing passage: "Whosoever heareth these words of mine and *doeth* them."

Why does Jesus lay this emphasis on action? It is here that we discern the essentially religious quality of his teaching. He does not reduce religion to morality, but finds in moral action the true path to that fellowship with God which is the aim of all religion. For the mystic, God is the absolute being behind all phenomena, and the way to meet him is to withdraw from the world of sense into the inner sanctuary of the soul. For the philosopher, God is the eternal mind, and to elevate our own reason so that we "think his thoughts after him" is to commune with God. Jesus conceived of God as the supreme will, which is forever working toward love

and righteousness. To commune with him is to participate in his will. It is not enough to have the mystical or philosophical knowledge of God. Fellowship with him can consist in nothing else than in doing his will. We become "children of God," we share in his essential nature, according as we act in our small sphere as he acts continually in his universe.

Closely connected with this demand for an active goodness is the other demand that all action must come from within. Under the old law it was the act alone that counted, but for Jesus the worth of the act is measured by the motive. This, indeed, is the essential part of the act, which by itself may signify nothing or may be a mere cloak for evil. It is here that Jesus made his grand innovation on all previous systems of ethic. In Judaism the legal idea had been worked out most fully, but all religions had based their moral demands on a similar principle. Certain modes of action were required of men by sacred custom or by the supposed command of a divinity. This divine law, like the human one, took account only of overt acts; a man's inward sentiments were his own concern, but he must answer to the higher powers for the things he did. With Jesus this rule was reversed. The will is that which

matters, and of which alone God makes a reckoning. It must be an active will, for otherwise it has no reality. But the action is of value only as it expresses the will, and even if it is faulty or mistaken it keeps its value when the right will is behind it. On the ground of this principle Jesus virtually abrogates the law. It is no longer necessary since its place is taken by the will. As a good tree produces good fruit so a right will has its spontaneous outcome in all right action. Indeed Jesus holds that the highest kind of goodness is unconscious. The right hand must not know what the left is doing. The servants of God will be surprised at the last Judgment when they find themselves accepted. Because the righteousness of the Pharisees is calculated, not the free outcome of a nature which cannot but flow forth in loving deeds, it is worthless.

Here, then, we can discern the purely religious character of Jesus' ethic. It is inseparable from the inward life, and in the last resort is nothing else than that life in its manifestation. Although his teaching for the most part is directed to right conduct Jesus is not occupied with morality but with the inward fellowship with God. We must not be deceived by the mere form of his precepts. Since his

demand is for active goodness he speaks definitely of what men must do; but his interest is much less in actions than in the will out of which they proceed. By acting like God men enter into fellowship with God, and this fellowship is the great end of life. Right action has value only as it serves as a means to that end. So instead of substituting morality for religion Jesus makes religion everything. "That ye may become children of your Father who is in heaven:" this is the one end and motive of all right living.

From this point of view we must understand the relation between the ethical teaching and the idea of the Kingdom. At first sight they may seem to have nothing but a formal, accidental connection. Jesus was inspired with hope for the Kingdom, he was also filled with a passion for righteousness; and the two things became entangled in his mind. Or, according to another theory, his ethic was meant to have only an interim value. When the Kingdom came there would be no temptation, no poverty, no offenses, and the precepts laid down by Jesus would cease to be necessary. But what of the crucial interval when men were preparing themselves for the Kingdom? The ethical teaching, with its rigorous

demands, was like a code of war-time measures, enacted only for the period of stress. Or Jesus' ethic had no other purpose than that of John the Baptist. John looked for a Judgment in which only the righteous would find acceptance with God, and taught men how to order their lives for this coming trial. Jesus required a loftier kind of righteousness, but it was related in just the same way to his message of the Kingdom.

Such theories, however, all miss the real drift and compass of the ethical teaching. There is no thought in Jesus' mind of a morality which will only hold good for a brief interval or for a special purpose. The particular acts of which he speaks may imply such conditions as we know now, but the motives behind them—love, faithfulness, goodness—are in their nature everlasting. They are not of those things which will vanish away in the new age but of those which will fully come. They constitute the very meaning of the Kingdom, and Jesus taught them that we may possess it now, amidst all the imperfections of this world.

But the relation of the ethical teaching to the hope of the Kingdom is still closer. The moral life as Jesus conceives it does not consist merely in obedi-

ence to certain principles. It cannot even be reduced to the one principle of love. No doubt the idea of love is primary with Jesus and may be made, in some sense, to include everything. Yet what Jesus calls for is not some one quality, even the highest, but the new will in which all impulses work together in complete harmony. Our will is to be no other than the will of God. So the moral life, in the full significance which Jesus gave to it, is the life of the Kingdom. That new order which will be established in the future will make it possible for men to live entirely for God. But even now we may submit to God's will and so hold fellowship with him. "The Kingdom of God is within you." In so far as you have in you the new will, issuing in such a life as Jesus requires, you possess the Kingdom.

(8) The Kingdom and Human Society

The moral demand, as it meets us in the Gospels, has always a social as well as an individual aspect. "Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart and mind and strength, and thy neighbour as thyself." Most of the sayings which have been preserved to us have this twofold bearing. The hope for the Kingdom involves a new social ideal.

In our time this aspect of the message has come into special prominence. Our most urgent problems are those which concern the obligations of man to man and the intercourse of races and classes with one another. In the effort to solve these problems we have been driven back to the principles laid down by Jesus, and have learned to study them with a new earnestness and understanding. The view has become widely current that he was above all a social reformer, and that the church's interpretation of his message has been willfully mistaken. He thought of the Kingdom not in its relation to the inward life but as the perfected society of the future. He looked forward to a time when all men would be united in a single brotherhood, when possessions would be justly distributed, when the self-seeking motive would disappear from the civic and industrial life. Jesus is classed with the reformers who have sought from time to time to build up society on a new basis. It was his hope for a better world in the future which he summed up in his great conception of the Kingdom of God.

Now in this view of the teaching there is doubtless a measure of truth. The idea of a community is involved in the very term "Kingdom of God." It is

impossible to conceive of God reigning without at the same time assuming a people over whom he reigns. King and community are correlative words. It is highly significant in this connection that Jesus deliberately chose the phrase "Kingdom of God." There were many alternative names under which he might have described the future,—"the new age," "eternal life," "the world to come"—and it was such other terms which had appealed to the apocalyptic writers. But Jesus speaks, almost invariably, of the Kingdom of God. He cannot have been insensible to the communal suggestion of this term, which had originated in the belief that God was King of Israel and continued to imply that God would finally reign over an elect people. Indeed it seems evident from the whole Gospel narrative that one of the primary aims of Jesus was to form a community of those who should inherit the Kingdom. His first act when he commenced his ministry in Galilee was to gather around him a body of disciples, and this small company was meant to be the nucleus of a greater one. When the Kingdom came there was to be a community prepared to enter it.

It is quite evident, too, that the whole drift of his teaching is social. On the purely self-regarding vir-

tues he has surprisingly little to say. He thinks of men always in relation to their fellow men. The qualities on which he lays stress—love, mercy, justice, forgiveness—are all those which find their exercise in the common life. Ever and again in the course of Christian history the attempt has been made to carry out the demands of Jesus in retirement from the world. Such efforts have always failed, and even the monastic ideal was found to be impracticable without a society of monks. The Christian life, by its very nature, can only be lived in constant relation to others, and the more varied the relations the more truly it can fulfill the law of Christ. So when he spoke of the Kingdom which would come hereafter, in which the will of God would absolutely prevail, he must have had in mind a great brotherhood—for only on this condition could the will of God be done. That his message did involve the communal idea hardly requires to be proved, for it had its historical outcome in the Church. The hope for the Kingdom embodied itself, by an inevitable process, in the Christian society.

There is truth, then, in the contention that Jesus' aim was social, and the modern emphasis on this side of his thought has been salutary and needful. Some

of the most important elements in our religion were obscured by the old conception that it had to do only with individual piety. Nevertheless it is impossible to accept the view that the primary interest of Jesus was in the communal life. He has nothing to say that bears directly on social or economic or political reforms. He does not look at men in the mass but at men as personal beings. This, indeed, is one of the new and distinctive aspects of his teaching. It is strangely assumed in much of our modern literature that we have outgrown the narrow individualism of ancient times and have learned to think socially, in terms of classes, nations, humanity as a whole. Jesus, we are told, was deficient in that larger outlook, and was interested only in the "neighbor" with whom we come into personal contact. But the truth is that he deliberately substituted his mode of thought for the other. The view which we regard as modern was the ancient one. It had always been the nation or the city or the social class which was taken as the unit. The individual had value only as a member of the greater whole, and it was Israel or Athens or Rome which was the object of divine favor. Jesus discovered the worth of men as personalities. He was the first to break away from the idea of the com-

munity, and to declare that every human being for his own sake was under the care of God. It is implicit in his teaching that all thought of men in the aggregate is due to an illusion. There is no such thing as "humanity" but only a multitude of separate human souls.

It is indeed true that Jesus has wrought a revolution in the social life, but he has done so precisely because he looked to the individual. He insisted that respect must be paid to personality, that even the poorest has his rights, that outward conditions must be such as to allow full development to every life. All progress for the last two thousand years has been determined by the gradual application of these principles of Jesus to all social institutions. The result has been the breaking down of ancient privileges and restrictions, and the advance toward modern democracy. But it is dangerous to identify Jesus with any political system, democratic or otherwise. All that can be deduced from his teaching is that society should be so organized as to serve the higher welfare of all its members. As he has been the strongest force in creating the new forms of communal life he may some day destroy them. The temptation is al-

ways to sacrifice the individual for the supposed good of the mass, and to every system in which this is done the Christian spirit is hostile. It was the personal life which Jesus sought to liberate, and wherever the community becomes an end in itself it will finally make shipwreck on the principles he laid down.

His primary interest was not in society but in the individual; but he recognized that man unfolds his personality through relation to his fellow men. The more your life is one of service to others the more you become yourself. We have thus the paradox that because Jesus was so profoundly concerned with the inward personal life his teaching is everywhere social. The Kingdom is within, but everything that makes for a fuller sympathy with our fellows helps also toward a deeper union with the divine will.

It is from this point of view, then, that we must explain the social interest which is so conspicuous in the thought of Jesus. That he had nothing in his mind but a world-brotherhood, a society perfectly organized and based on just principles, cannot for a moment be admitted. It is quite conceivable that such a society may some day be realized. Already to

some extent it is emerging, and in a century or two we may fairly anticipate that war will have ceased, that the world's goods will be equably divided, that all races will be firmly knit together. The religion of Christ is pointing us toward these ends, and is helping us to attain them. But when they are attained shall we be able to say that the Kingdom of God is now come? The question is partly answered when we consider the advance we have ourselves made. If the most ardent reformer a few centuries ago could have foreseen the present day—our wealth of knowledge, our larger liberties, the humaner spirit in our industries, the movements toward peace and racial understanding—he would have judged that the Kingdom of God must be almost come. We are ourselves bitterly conscious that it is as far distant as ever. Ages hence, when the loftiest dreams of to-day are realized, there will be the same sense of disillusionment. The perfecting of society is only a means to an end, and unless it serves that end it is meaningless. When Jesus spoke of the Kingdom he was not thinking of any outward conditions but of a spiritual fulfillment. The Kingdom will not come until men attain in their inward life to a true fellowship with God.

(9) Jesus' Conception of the Kingdom

We are now in a position to attempt some answer to the question, "What did Jesus mean by the Kingdom of God?" He never defined it, and no single definition can be deduced from his words. The conception is a many-sided one, and all its aspects need to be taken together. This is the chief difficulty in understanding it—that while it implies many different things they all mean ultimately the same thing. It can only be grasped by noting separately all its manifold sides, and yet when we so try to grasp it we miss the inner reality.

(1) In the first place, Jesus took over the Jewish-apocalyptic hope of a new age coming, when God would overthrow all usurping powers and assert his rule over the world. This hope of a glorious future was real to Jesus, and he believed that it was soon to be fulfilled. It enabled him to visualize the Kingdom, and his thought is everywhere conditioned by it. Yet to explain his message wholly by this hope which provided its framework is to leave out everything that is essential.

(2) Again, the Kingdom stands for the higher spiritual order which lies behind the visible world

and gives it meaning. A consummation is to come in which it will be fully manifest; but God is reigning now, and in the light of that day when he will visibly reign we can discern that higher order in which, as his children, we can already have our part. We can trust in his providence; we can live for the everlasting things; we can reach out through all appearances to that which lies beyond, and which alone is real.

(3) But while the Kingdom includes all higher reality it stands more especially for the moral order. It means the perfect fulfillment of that will of God which under earthly conditions can only be dimly apprehended. As yet our obedience to it is a compromise with custom, tradition, considerations of worldly prudence. A day is coming when it will be fully manifest and will assert itself as the sole law. In the hope of the coming age we can lay hold of the moral ideal, bringing all our action to the test of what God requires. It is for this reason that the teaching of Jesus is prevailingly ethical. Morality is not an end in itself, but since the Kingdom is above all the moral order it is through moral action that we must strive to possess it.

(4) The Kingdom is realized in the inward life

of fellowship with God. In the age that is coming men will know God as Father and dwell in his presence. This communion with God will constitute the *life* which will be the supreme blessing of the Kingdom. But even now men can know that presence of God. According as they know it they share in the life of the Kingdom, they already obtain the Kingdom. Here we discern the true significance of the ethic of Jesus. He thinks of all right action as springing out of the inward life and at the same time as fostering and unfolding it. The action does not exist for itself but is the means whereby we attain to fellowship with God.

(5) The Kingdom implies a community of God's people and is thus a social as well as a moral and spiritual ideal. All endeavor for the betterment of the world is in true accordance with the teaching of Jesus; yet the social purpose was not his primary one. He sought to create a new inward life, and his interest in the community was all for the sake of it. If he has done more than any other for the transforming of all institutions it is not because he dealt with them directly, which he never did. By changing the wills of men he compelled a change in all human relations. By throwing all emphasis on spiritual things he

brought about a new attitude to the material side of life. Perhaps it is here that we are to find in his teaching the true solution of those social and political problems which confront us at the present time. The root of our trouble is that men are all struggling for the material things, and these are limited in quantity, and one man's possession of them excludes his neighbor's. So long as these things only are desired there will be strife and injustice, and no scheme that can possibly be devised on the ground of a material view of life will do anything to help us. No peace can come until men recognize with Jesus "that the real ends are spiritual. All men can share in love, truth, goodness, wisdom. The riches of them are inexhaustible. The more that each man can increase his store of them the more there will be for all the others. This is the true contribution of Jesus toward the building up of the perfect human society, and it cannot be dismissed as abstract and visionary. All progress has consisted in a growing perception of the worth of spiritual things. The very increase of material wealth has brought to light, ever more clearly, its intrinsic emptiness. The abundance of our outward possessions has left us more and more dissatisfied, and has done almost nothing for the true pur-

poses of life. May we not dare to hope that the idea of Jesus, which has seemed hitherto a mere counsel of perfection, will some day be accepted as a practical motive? Only then will human society begin in any way to reflect that new community which is to inherit the Kingdom of God.

(10) The Value of the Apocalyptic Forms

The message of Jesus was a many-sided one, and all its meanings were involved in that conception which was given him in Jewish apocalyptic. It has often been argued that this origin of the message affects its whole validity. The hope of the Kingdom, as we now see it, had arisen out of the peculiar history of the Jewish people, and reflects ideas which have been long outgrown. We cannot now believe that God is suddenly to change the world's order, and since Jesus rested his teaching on that illusion must it not follow that the whole structure falls to the ground? Those sayings about God and his purpose which seem to breathe the timeless spirit of religion are after all bound up with ancient imaginations which are now meaningless. To this it may be answered that the essential message of Jesus does not depend on the particular forms in which he expressed

it. Just as his words can be translated out of the language in which they were uttered, so they can be detached from the apocalyptic hopes which were like the mother tongue of his thought. This, as we shall see later, was the task to which the church set itself as soon as it found a footing in the Gentile world; and it is still engaged in that never-ending effort to interpret in new terms what Jesus meant. By means of the old apocalyptic he taught a message of enduring value.

At the same time the forms themselves must not be treated as a mere husk which may now be thrown away. Nothing is more remarkable than the hold they have always maintained on the Christian mind. Since the days of Paul there have been hundreds of theological systems in which the thought of Jesus has been embodied more adequately, it might seem, than in his own apocalyptic. One after another they have lost their vitality, and it will be the same, we may be sure, with the new formulations of the gospel to-day. For the great mass of Christian people the original idea of the Kingdom is still real. They look for a day when God will judge the earth, when he will make all things new, when he will gather his people into a heavenly community. The reason why

these beliefs have persisted is not merely that they are found in the Bible, or that they were absorbed without thinking in early childhood. Their strength is due to their inherent religious value. They answer, for one thing, to the inborn feeling that there is something beyond the natural order. In spite of all scientific theory men cannot but believe that the universe is more than a network of iron law, and so long as this faith survives they will find meaning in the ancient hope that God will interpose and establish his Kingdom. It is easy to make light of those millennialian outbursts which in our day chiefly affect the very ignorant; yet in their crude fashion they represent a protest, which is always needed, against the purely mechanical view of the world. Again, there is truth in the apocalyptic idea that God will fulfill his purpose through sudden crisis. Too often, in our modern obsession with evolutionary doctrine, we think of the world as continually improving by a gradual, automatic process. Many people, we are told, lost their religious faith in consequence of the great war. Their God was one whose sole function was to watch a well-regulated machine, and when it broke down, when the onward march was suddenly halted, he seemed to vanish. One value of apocalyp-

tic has always been that it makes room in the scheme of things for apparent catastrophe. Not only through ordered progress but sometimes through the incalculable, God is working toward his Kingdom.

Apocalyptic, moreover, presents the future and unseen in terms of the imagination. That is why we always fall back on Jesus' own conception. It is often argued that his teaching should be lifted entirely out of the old forms and set forth in ethical or philosophical language; and this is what the church has been trying to do since the beginning. But nothing is more evanescent than abstract statements of religious truth. They serve for one age but the next has moved on to some new philosophy and the previous formulations are worthless. It is one source of strength in Jesus' religion that he did not employ any science or metaphysic but expressed his meaning in those apocalyptic symbols. His account of the Kingdom has the advantage which poetry always has over literal statement. It makes appeal not to modes of reasoning which are only for a time but to primary instincts which never change. To this day we are compelled to think of the Kingdom as Jesus did when we try to give satisfying expression to our Christian faith.

(11) Jesus' Relation to the Kingdom

We have now considered in its various aspects the meaning of that message which Jesus proclaimed. One question remains which lies outside of our immediate inquiry but which bears on it so closely that it cannot be left wholly unanswered. In what relation did Jesus himself stand to the Kingdom? The church acclaimed him as the Messiah, through whom, according to prophecy, the Kingdom would come in; and this became the distinctive belief of Christianity. The message of the Kingdom was blended with the message about Jesus himself, and was in some measure overshadowed by it. Faith in the gospel meant faith in Jesus as the Messiah.

It has been maintained by some modern writers that Jesus advanced no personal claim. He came forward as the prophet or herald of the Kingdom, and it was his followers who after his death conferred on him the name of Messiah. When once this conception of him had been established a ground was sought for it in his own teaching. The earliest tradition, as preserved in Mark's Gospel, admits that he never publicly announced himself and only made the claim among his own disciples and toward the very

close of his life. According to the later Synoptic writers his work from the outset bore a Messianic character. In the Fourth Gospel everything is made to turn on the personal claim, which is now understood in the sense that as Messiah he was the eternal Word, one with God from the beginning.

Now it may be held that this question of the Messiahship is of purely historical interest. Those who deny that Jesus ever made the claim are usually careful to point out that no religious issue is at stake. Even although Jesus never professed to be more than prophet or teacher his gospel would have the same value, or perhaps a higher one, since it would be freed from its old apocalyptic wrappings. The controversy as to whether Jesus was the Messiah was a fight over shadows. The Messiah was an imaginary figure. He belonged to the realm of mythology just as much as Hercules or Apollo. It is hardly worth discussing seriously whether Jesus is to be identified with a non-existent being.

Yet there can be no doubt that an issue of supreme importance hangs on the question of the Messiahship of Jesus. That the figure of the Messiah was a creation of apocalyptic fancy may be granted. But the place assigned to him in the traditional scheme was

that of bringing in the Kingdom, and if Jesus called himself Messiah he must have meant that he was not merely the herald of the Kingdom but the instrument under God through whom it would be realized. This is the real issue, and our whole understanding of Jesus' mission clearly depends on it. Did he believe that he was himself, in some manner, necessary to the fulfillment of the Kingdom? The question affects not only his personal history but the substance of his message.

That Jesus did indeed regard himself as Messiah it is only a perverted critical ingenuity than can deny. The precise time and manner in which he made the claim may be disputed, and the records are admittedly vague. But it may be confidently affirmed that if they had been altogether silent on the claim we should have found it necessary to assume that he made it. We should have felt that a factor was missing without which the whole story was unintelligible. Why did Jesus go up to Jerusalem? Why was he put to death? How did he awaken that passionate faith and loyalty which gave rise to the Christian church?

That he made some unique claim is evident not only from the history but from the whole character

of his work. He does not speak of the Kingdom merely as a prophet who rejoices in the hope of it. Everywhere he assumes that he himself has a peculiar relation to the Kingdom. Men were impressed in his lifetime by the authority with which he spoke, and which still impresses us as we read the sayings. He takes for granted that he bears a divine commission and that his word is final. It is true that he does not assert this, in the manner of the Fourth Gospel, by insisting on his Messiahship; but the note of authority is all the more significant because it is unconscious. The conviction that he speaks for God is with him always, as part of his very being. Again, he assumes the right to admit men into the Kingdom; he offers forgiveness of sins; he believes that the powers of the future are active in him, so that he can perform miracles. Whatever we make of these miracles it is certain that he was regarded as a wonder-worker, and that he himself never doubted his extraordinary gift. To be sure he founds no claim on this gift, and declares that his disciples also, if they have faith, may perform miracles. None the less he is conscious that these marvelous powers, which have projected themselves out of the age to come into the present, have first become manifest in himself. It is through

him that the Kingdom has been brought so near. Once more, he is aware that the nature of the Kingdom is revealed to him as to no other. He can speak with direct knowledge of that will of God which will prevail hereafter. There may be dispute as to the famous saying, "No man knoweth the Father but the Son," * and in the words as recorded there is undoubtedly a suggestion of later theological thought. But the idea conveyed by them is not to be sought merely in one isolated and dubious saying, but underlies the teaching everywhere. Jesus was conscious that in some unique way he represented the Kingdom.

Here, then, we can perceive the true significance of the Messianic claim. It seems more than probable from the study of the history that Jesus attained gradually and not without many misgivings to the specific conviction that he was Messiah; and his hesitation is not, perhaps, difficult to explain. The Messianic idea did not correspond, except very imperfectly, to his own sense of his mission. It was entangled with national expectations in which he did not share. It laid on him a terrible responsibility. He was well aware that as soon as he declared himself Messiah he would be forced into conflict with the ruling

* Mt. 11:27; Lk. 10:22.

the apocalyptic hope God was to fulfill his purposes through the Messiah, and Jesus had to identify himself with this mysterious figure. As contrasted with those who had only foretold the Kingdom he was to be the instrument of its coming, and therefore he was the Messiah. The name was inadequate, and he accepted it with misgivings; yet it was the only name whereby he could in any manner define the true meaning of his work.

Jesus' claim to Messiahship must therefore be interpreted in the light of his whole conception of the Kingdom. While he starts from the hope of a new age he thinks not so much of an outward change as of the spiritual conditions which will obtain in the future. To have a will in harmony with God's will, to enter into fellowship with God, is to possess the Kingdom. The work of the Messiah is to make this new life possible. Through the Messiah men will attain to the Kingdom in the sense that they will apprehend the higher world, they will receive power to do God's will, they will know God as Father. This is not to import a fanciful allegorical meaning into Jesus' claim to be Messiah, but only to explain it in accordance with his own teaching. Everywhere in Jewish thought the idea of the Messiah is deter-

mined by some given view of the Kingdom of God. When the Kingdom is Israel, delivered and exalted, the Messiah is the Messianic king. When it is the reign of righteousness he appears, as in the Psalms of Solomon, to establish justice on the earth. When it is a transcendental order, as in most of the apocalypses, he is a mysterious heavenly being. It would follow that Jesus likewise conceived of the Messiah as inaugurating such a Kingdom as he looked for. "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven": that was how he understood the Kingdom. When he declared himself Messiah he must have thought of his work in its moral significance. Through him the great spiritual change would be effected. The will of God would come at last to its fulfillment, in the world and in the hearts of men.

Thus the Messianic claim is no excrescence on the gospel, due to some illusion on the part of Jesus' followers, or to some error or extravagance of his own. The church rightly fixed on it from the very first as the central fact in the gospel. In Jesus it saw the Messiah, the Lord, who would return to bring in the Kingdom, and who was guiding and sustaining his people in their quest for it. As he had proclaimed the Kingdom he was himself the Captain of our

salvation. He had imparted the living power by which men could attain to a new life. This was the claim which he made for himself and in which the faith of the church must ever be rooted. In him appeared the Messiah, "who opened the Kingdom of heaven to all believers."

III

THE LATER DEVELOPMENT

(1) *The Transition*

THE hope of the Kingdom, on which Jesus had built his message, seems almost to disappear from the later New Testament teaching. From this alone it has sometimes been inferred that Christianity in its historical form was virtually a new religion, of Hellenistic type. Jesus was ostensibly placed at the center, but he was transformed into a divine being. His gospel of the Kingdom was replaced by a system of theological doctrine.

Now it is true that in the later New Testament books we seldom meet with the term "Kingdom of God," though it is never completely forgotten. Yet the idea itself is always present, expressed under many different forms. It is not too much to say that if the Synoptic Gospels had never been written we should still be able to determine, from the other books, at least the purport of Jesus' teaching. We might be in doubt as to the precise term he used, but

in view of the constant recurrence of one main theme we should know that he had spoken of a final consummation. We should know that he had laid down a rule of life by which men might be conformed even now to that will of God which would prevail in the future. The message of the Kingdom was never lost. We can trace it all through the New Testament and afterwards, as the great highroad along which Christian thought has never ceased to travel. It has taken many strange windings and passed through country which at every turn has shown a different aspect. But the Christian message has been always, as it was at first, the gospel of the Kingdom.

Why is it that the later conceptions appear so different from that of Jesus himself? Here, no doubt, we have to allow for those foreign influences which came into operation after his death. They did not create the historical gospel, but they had an all-important part in shaping it. The hope of the Kingdom was taken over by Jesus from the Old Testament and from the Rabbis and apocalypticists. It was so impregnated with Jewish beliefs, so closely bound up with Jewish history, that to the Gentile mind it was unintelligible. The very phrase "Kingdom of God" would perhaps have carried with it a political

suggestion, dangerous at a time when Christians were under the suspicion of disloyalty.¹ In any case it would have required elaborate explanation. So as soon as the gospel passed over into the Gentile world the effort was made to translate the term employed by Jesus into one that could be understood; and this was not difficult. For although the idea of the Kingdom was Jewish it answered to conceptions which belonged to religion generally. Greek and Oriental thought had long arrived at these conceptions by paths of their own, and it was inevitable that Christian missionaries should adapt themselves to the Gentile mind. They sought to express in new language what appeared to them the essential meaning of Jesus' own message. This could not be done without throwing it into a different context, and to this extent there is ground for the assertion that Christianity, in the course of the first century, changed its character. Jesus' idea of the Kingdom could not be fully reproduced under the Greek modes of thought.

The alien influences, however, would have been

¹ Cf. Justin, *Apologia* II, "When you hear that we look for a Kingdom, you suppose, without making inquiry, that we mean a human kingdom."

ineffectual if there had not been forces in the religion itself which worked along with them. The nature of these forces has already been indicated.

(1) On the one hand, the message taught by Jesus was now illuminated by what he had been in his own Person. His life had closed in marvelous events which were fraught, as everyone could see, with a deep significance. Why had he died on the Cross? What was the meaning of his Resurrection? Whither had he gone and in what manner would he return? It was these questions concerning Jesus himself which mainly occupied the church. He became the object of faith, and all converts were required at baptism to make the confession "Jesus is Lord." The beginnings of this attitude to Jesus can be traced in his own lifetime. For his disciples he had been not only Teacher but Master, and this personal loyalty to him was intensified after his death. The hope of the Kingdom was now inseparable from the belief in Jesus as the acknowledged Messiah. Sometimes the difference between the earlier and the later gospel is made to consist in this—that while Jesus looked for the Kingdom of God the church took its stand on faith in Jesus. But it is forgotten that this faith included in it the

hope for the Kingdom and made it more certain. Jesus had departed in order to return, bringing in the Kingdom which he had promised. To believe in Jesus as the Lord who would presently appear in glory was to wait confidently for the Kingdom.

(2) The new interpretation, however, was made necessary by the message itself. While Jesus had proclaimed the Kingdom under apocalyptic forms of thought he had far transcended the old Jewish conception. The Kingdom as he knew it was not merely the coming age but the moral ideal, the higher spiritual order, the inward fellowship with God. As men reflected on the message its manifold import became apparent. Especially when it was carried into the Gentile world and thrown into new language, its implications came to light. The age was one of religious and intellectual ferment. In all the great cities of the empire there were diverse currents of thought—ethical, social, mystical, philosophical; and all the conflicting movements laid hold of the new gospel, and found in it something to which they responded. The message of the Kingdom assumed a different character as one or another of its meanings was brought to the forefront. So within the first generation the church had divided

into many sects, each of them maintaining the gospel in some particular form. No doubt there were many causes which brought about this division, but the chief one was nothing else than the nature of the gospel itself. It was found impossible to bind down to a single formula the many-sided conception of Jesus.

(2) The Kingdom as Apocalyptic

The first effect of Jesus' departure was to heighten the hope of the Kingdom on its purely apocalyptic side. Jesus had died and risen again, and was now clothed with his full authority as Messiah. At any moment he might return to judge the world and inaugurate the new age. It is not to be wondered at that under the influence of this belief the church was intent on the apocalyptic aspect of the message, almost to the exclusion of every other. The disciples were assured that they were now living on the very edge of the great crisis, and nothing mattered but that they should be prepared for meeting it. Sayings of Jesus about the future were made more definite and understood quite literally. His own predictions were supplemented from Jewish apocalyptic. The one desire was to know

more of the nature and circumstances of the great change which was so near. There can be little doubt that the mood of the primitive church was far more apocalyptic than Jesus' own. What had been for him the framework of a spiritual teaching was now of absorbing interest for its own sake.

Even when the first eager hopes had died down this interest in the future continued to be an essential element in Christian thought. Paul, in his deeper reflection, broke away from it, but he never ceased to look for a literal return of Christ to establish a visible reign of God. The writer to the Hebrews makes room for the same beliefs, side by side with his lofty idealism. For the mass of Christians the apocalyptic hope in its original form maintained its place, and has done so to this day. There are many indications in the New Testament that nothing caused such grave misgivings as the apparent failure of Christ to return and fulfill his promise. Ordinary believers had grounded their religion on this hope, and when it proved vain they seemed to have lost everything.

In two ways, however, the apocalyptic of the church was different from that which we find in the Gospels. (1) In the first place, it was more

fully elaborated. Where Jesus had spoken of the future in vague and half-symbolical terms, the church built up an articulate scheme, with the aid of suggestions from Jewish and occasionally from Pagan sources. Not only so, but it began to produce its own apocalyptic; this, indeed, was one of the chief activities of the early Christian teachers. We hear particularly of one order in the primitive ministry, that of the prophets, who in a mood of ecstasy had visions of the future and described them in glowing language. Paul himself had this prophetic gift. He tells how he was caught up into the third heaven and heard unutterable things.³ He speaks of a "wisdom" which he imparted to his more mature converts, dealing, as we can gather from his dark allusions, with those transactions in the heavenly world which had led up to the Incarnation.⁴ In rapturous passages of his Epistles⁴ he seems to reproduce some of his prophetic utterances. One conspicuous example of Christian prophecy has been preserved to us in the book of Revelation. It is written on the model of the Jewish apocalypses, and makes constant use of their ideas and imagery.

³ Cor. 12:4.

⁴ 1 Cor. 2.

⁴ E.g. the closing portions of Rom. 8 and 1 Cor. 15.

Yet it everywhere bears the stamp of originality. A new factor has entered into the apocalyptic view and has profoundly changed its character. (2) This, then, is the other great difference between the earlier and the later apocalyptic. For the traditional hope the Messiah had been at most a shadowy figure. He does not appear at all in most of the Jewish apocalyptic books, and where a place is given him his action is purely accidental. He has no personal attributes. His function is little more than to preside, in the name of God, over the final events. For Christian apocalyptic the thought of Christ is always central. It is he who makes the Kingdom possible, and its coming depends on his advent. The community that inherits it will be his people. He will be enthroned in the Kingdom and all its circumstances will in some manner reflect him. For this reason alone it is false to say that the church merely took over that view of the future which had come down to it in apocalyptic Judaism.

In even the crudest of the early Christian forecasts there is this new element which enters into their very substance. The Kingdom of the future has Christ for its center, and those are highest in it who have served him faithfully unto death. When the

Kingdom is thus associated with Christ it ceases to be merely apocalyptic. There may be no direct attempt to think of it spiritually, but by the mere fact that it implies the Christian revelation it stands for higher religious values. This is abundantly evident when we compare our book of Revelation with the Jewish Apocalyptic writings. It might seem as if the Christian seer knew little of Jesus' teaching and is content to fall back on the old, realistic conceptions of a happier world. Yet the Kingdom as he imagines it is bound up with no mere national hope but with the victory of Christ's cause; the thought of it is made the inspiration to holiness, righteousness, self-sacrifice. Above all, it is definitely related to the hope of immortality. In Judaism this hope had never shaken itself free from the national idea, and was dim and uncertain at the best. "I know," says Martha sadly, in the Fourth Gospel, "that my brother will rise again at the resurrection, in the last day."⁵ This thought of a life reserved for a distant resurrection was taken over by Christian apocalyptic, but it has never had more than a formal value. It was transcended from the first in virtue of the faith that Christ ruled in the future

⁵ Jm. 11:24.

world and would be mindful of his people. This is already apparent in Paul. He is bound by the accepted view that there must be an interval before he can enter on the future life, but with his Christian instinct he rebels against this belief. He feels that if fellowship with Christ means anything it cannot be interrupted. The believer must enter at once on the immortality to which Christ has already attained.⁶ The same faith pervades the book of Revelation. The writer assumes, in the apocalyptic manner, that the mass of men will only rise in a "second resurrection" at the last day; Christians must await the final triumph of the church before they receive their inheritance.⁷ Yet all this belongs to the outward scheme of the book. Its power consists in its assertion of a personal immortality which the believer can confidently hope for immediately after death. We read in the book of Acts that Stephen in his dying vision saw the heavens opened and Christ sitting at the right hand of God.⁸ A similar vision throws its light over all Christian apocalyptic. Christ is now the central figure of the Kingdom, and the hope of it takes shape from the knowledge of what he was and of what he still is in the experience of

⁶ 2 Cor. 5:1; Rom. 8:34f. ⁷ Rev. 20:5, 6. ⁸ Ac. 7:55, 56.

his people. Through this new factor that has entered into it the old apocalyptic is entirely changed.

The change reacted on the whole theory which lay at the basis of apocalyptic thought. It had been assumed that the world's history fell into two ages, and that the Kingdom of God was that age which was still in the future. Jesus himself had started from this conception, and it was taken for granted by the primitive church, which adopted "hope" as its watchword. The disciples were those who "waited for the Lord's appearing." They were living in the present age but looked beyond it. Their attitude was one of patient expectation in view of the day, which could not be long delayed, when Christ would return and the new age would set in.

This idea of futurity, however, ceased gradually to be dominant. It was still believed that the Lord would appear and make all things new, and Paul was confident, almost to the end, that he would himself survive until that day. The word "hope" continued to be used in a comprehensive sense for the Christian religion itself. Yet an increasing emphasis was placed on the other conception that the Kingdom is already present. Christ had revealed an invisible, heavenly world in which God reigns. He

had called his people even now to share in its citizenship. The apocalyptic outlook changes, if one might so express it, from the category of time to that of place. It is concerned not with the two ages but with the two worlds.

This change is illustrated in the book of Revelation. Ostensibly the writer works with the old apocalyptic idea that the present age is closing amidst a scene of ruin and disaster. The church has only to wait for a little while longer and the future, so ardently expected, will break in. Yet what John offers to his fellow sufferers is the vision not so much of the future as of the heavenly world. He assures them that their cause, which to human eyes seems to be hopeless, is one with the victorious cause of God. He draws a curtain aside and opens "a door in heaven" so that they may behold that other world.⁸ All that they are struggling for here has there been realized. God has already established his Kingdom and they have part in it. They are to bear up manfully in the knowledge that they represent on earth the triumphant company in heaven. Such is the idea which runs through the book and gives meaning to its fantastic imagery. The new outlook

⁸ Rev. 4:1.

was due, in some measure, to the great conflict in which the church now found itself involved. One of the functions of apocalyptic had always been to bring comfort in dark times by the promise of future deliverance; but the church had realized, as soon as it entered on its period of trial, that this was not enough. There is a modern apocalyptic which bids us find our inspiration in the thought of a distant future. Not in our time but some day, perhaps centuries hence, the world will be free and happy, and in that hope we can work and endure. This is often put forward as a substitute for the old religious motive, but one may doubt whether it ever yet had much efficacy. Men require to feel that they themselves have in some way a share in the fulfillment. In the assurance that this cause of theirs, although it seems to be losing, is yet linked up with one that is invincible, they are capable of faith and sacrifice. It was the need for this certainty which compelled the church to turn from the apocalyptic hope to the thought of that heavenly world in which God reigns. But two other factors coöperated with the practical need. On the one hand there was that faith in Christ which had transformed the old expectations. Christ would not only come, in some near or distant future,

to establish the Kingdom, but already he reigns with God. In so far as they were one with Christ his people had attained to the Kingdom. On the other hand, as it passed into the Gentile world the church was brought into contact with Greek philosophical thinking. Ideas from this source began to mingle with those inherited from Jewish apocalyptic. The conception of the Kingdom, like all the primitive beliefs, was now apprehended in a different way.

(3) *The Ideal World*

It was inevitable that the new religion should seek to present itself to the Gentiles under forms of philosophical thought. Philosophy in the first century had come out of the schools into the market place. Its ideas were applied to law and morals, were freely discussed in ordinary conversation, had stamped themselves on the current language. Religion, more especially, had allied itself with philosophy, and it was in the garb of secret philosophies that the new Oriental cults made their appeal to the West. Christianity would in any case have fallen in with the universal practice, but the way had already been prepared for it through Judaism. Philo of Alexandria had attempted to work out a theology

for Hebrew religion, and had employed the Greek philosophy as his instrument. His writings alone have survived from the Judaism of the Dispersion, but there is reason to believe that he was only the most eminent of many thinkers who were trying to expound the Old Testament teaching in the language of Platonism and Stoicism.

It was the apocalyptic ideas in Christianity which lent themselves most naturally to philosophical interpretation. Jewish apocalyptic, as we have already seen, was a kind of philosophy. The Hebrew mind had not learned, like the Greek, to work by logical processes, but it had sought in its own manner to explore the world which lies beyond the senses. By vision, imagination, reflection on the ancient oracles, the apocalyptists had set themselves to provide answers to a number of questions which were, in their nature, speculative. When Jewish thinkers had become acquainted with Greek philosophy they did not give up those older speculations but tried to present them in what seemed a more adequate form. This, it may be said, is the effort of Philo. At first sight he may appear to break away entirely from the Hebrew beliefs and to replace them by conceptions borrowed from philosophy. It

has often been remarked that if he had any knowledge whatever of the apocalyptic side of Jewish thought he leaves it entirely out of account. Yet on a deeper view Philo himself may fairly be classed among the apocalypticists. Certainly he does not use their methods, and has hardly one specific idea in common with them. But his interest is essentially the same as theirs—to discover the nature of that higher world of being which lies beyond the visible. In his reliance on vision and ecstasy, in his efforts to discover secret meanings in Old Testament tradition, in his love of allegory and symbol, we can perceive a real affinity to the apocalyptic type of mind. The one difference is that Philo resolves the concrete imagery of apocalyptic into the abstractions of Greek speculation. Instead of outward supernatural agencies he sees a play of qualities, ideas, principles. What he offers is a philosophical equivalent of the old apocalyptic.

So it is not difficult to see how the conception of the Kingdom of God, in the course of the Gentile mission, came to be apprehended in a new manner. The ideas of Jesus were not replaced by something else, but were expressed under Greek instead of Jewish forms. He had spoken of the Kingdom of

God, conceiving of it as the new age when God's will would be fulfilled, but behind the apocalyptic idea there was that of a divine, invisible order. This was now understood and formulated in the light of philosophy.

Greek thought had arrived at a conception which bore a real analogy to the Hebrew one, and which found its classical expression in Plato's doctrine of the ideal world. This doctrine, in one form or another, underlies all the later speculation. Plato had held that all visible things are imperfect copies of ideal types, which cannot be apprehended by the senses but only by the mind. This seemed to him to be a sure deduction from the very nature of thought. When you see an object you can pass a judgment on it, comparing it with what it aims at being, and recognizing where it falls short. You have never seen that perfect type, but somehow it must exist, since you can use it as the criterion of what is actually before you. It is, indeed, the only thing which does properly exist. It is the one behind the many, the abiding reality which reflects itself, more or less clearly, in the changing forms.

Plato was thus led to his theory of a higher world, a world of ideas over against the world of sense.

He reached this theory through his effort to explain the nature of knowledge. Before we can know we must have a truth present to the mind and so apply it to the things in which it is embodied. How do we know that an object is beautiful? Because there is born in us an idea of beauty, by which we can test the things we see. We do not so much learn as recollect, judging each new appearance by that perfect type which, in some inexplicable way, we know already. Thus Plato regards the mind as native to a world of higher forms and continually recalling what it has known in some other state of being. But although the theory grew out of an intellectual need it becomes in Plato's hands essentially religious. Men are to live their lives here with the knowledge that their true interests lie elsewhere. They are to look at all that is transient under the light of the unchanging. This religious aspect of the theory comes out most clearly in the culminating doctrine of the Idea of the Good. All visible things have their ideal types, but these types themselves are the outcome and reflection of the Good. They are perfect in so far as they participate in the Good, which is itself beyond them and apart from them. Plato compares it to the sun, which illuminates and

quickens all other things. It might well be argued that the philosophy of Plato is ultimately a religion, in which the Idea of the Good corresponds to God.

Perhaps no Christian teacher in the first century had an immediate acquaintance with Plato's work. His influence on Christian theology was all-important, but it acted through indirect channels—the general thinking of the time, the various forms of mystical religion, above all the Alexandrian philosophy, Philo, the grand exponent of that philosophy, was himself a Jew, profoundly in sympathy with the essential Hebrew beliefs, but he interprets them by means of Greek speculation. When he explains the Creation story in terms of Platonic idealism he distinguishes between God in his absolute Being and God as an active power, who goes forth from himself in the Logos or divine Reason. The world which we know is modeled on a world which exists in this Reason of God. According to Philo's favorite metaphor, God is like an architect who first constructs a building in his mind. This creation in the mind is the essential building. The structure of stone and lime is only a copy, wrought out in imperfect materials, of that which has first existed in thought. So the world as we see it is the reflection of the true

world, created in the thought of the divine Architect and apprehended by our own thought. Philo sometimes speaks as if the Logos and that intelligible world were one and the same, inasmuch as the whole sum of God's thought is expressed in the world which he creates. At other times he seems to identify the intelligible world with the actual cosmos, which embodies and manifests the world conceived by God. A beautiful building may be regarded as a projection of thought. It really consists not of stone and timber but of thought, which informs the crude materials and gives them harmony and meaning. So for Philo the contemplation of the world is a means of attaining to God. Through the visible world we can lay hold of the invisible, and unite ourselves with the Logos and with God himself.

This metaphysical doctrine of Philo may seem to have little in common with that conception of the Kingdom of God which passed from Jewish apocalyptic into Christianity. Yet Philo, as we have seen, was in the true succession of the Jewish thinkers. He had before his mind the idea of a world set free from all limitations, in which God alone would reign. Under the Greek influences he conceived of it, not in the manner of the prophets

as a world of righteousness, but as the divine order in contrast with the earthly one. But this conception also was implicit in Hebrew thinking. It lies in the background of the apocalyptic visions of the new age. It forms a real element in the thought of Jesus, and needed only to be philosophically defined. In the light of Philonic doctrine this was now possible.

From Philo, therefore, the Christian thinkers took over the idea of an intelligible world which is the reality behind all visible existence. This metaphysical doctrine is henceforth blended with the original conception of the Kingdom of God. The two ideas had grown out of different roots, and might seem at first sight to have no affinity. Plato and Philo move in a region of abstractions which appear to be far removed from the realistic Hebrew belief in a new age, breaking in through a sudden crisis. Yet behind both conceptions there is the sense that earthly things are imperfect and that somewhere there must be fulfillment. It was recognized almost from the first that Greek and Christian thinkers could meet on a common ground.

The merging of the two conceptions is already

apparent in Paul. One of Paul's characteristic words is "incorruption" (*aphtharsia*) a word of philosophical origin, which marks the changeless quality of the spiritual things. The Christian, for Paul, has part in the realm of the unchanging, as opposed to this world of decay. The contrast between "this world" and that higher sphere of true existence is drawn out explicitly in several well-known passages. "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face." ¹⁰ "While we look not at the things which are seen but at those which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." ¹¹ In a verse like this we have clearly passed out of the domain of Jewish apocalyptic thought. The old conceptions of the new age and of the upper world in which God dwells amidst his angels have been transformed under the influence of Platonic idealism.

In one book, more particularly, the so-called Epistle to the Hebrews, the whole Christian message is construed from this new point of view. The book is especially noteworthy as we can trace in it

¹⁰ 1 Cor. 13:12.

¹¹ 2 Cor. 4:18.

the actual transition from the apocalyptic to the philosophical mode of thought. With one side of his mind the writer remains within the limits of the traditional hope. He makes room for the belief in the coming age, when Christ will appear and make all things new. Like the author of Revelation he imagines a heavenly world, which contains the true sanctuary where Christ ministers as our High-Priest, and the true Jerusalem into which Christ's people will finally be gathered. But behind all this imagery borrowed from apocalyptic there is the Platonic conception of an ideal world which is the real one although invisible. It is by means of this conception that the writer tries to explain the meaning of the work of Christ. As Christians we are enabled, while in this passing world, to apprehend the unseen things and to make them our only certainties. We can live amidst the changing and unreal with our eyes fixed on the everlasting. Hence the new significance which this writer gives to Faith. For Paul it is the act of trust and self-surrender; in Hebrews it is the power of reaching out to the unseen. By faith we have knowledge of the higher world. Christ has brought it near to us and taught us to live for it, so that believing in him we have an anchor of the soul which

"penetrates into that which is within the veil."¹² Thus in Hebrews the Christian hope of the Kingdom of God becomes one with an abiding sense of the ideal world.

This new strain of thought is no less characteristic of the Fourth Gospel, though it is there combined, as we shall see later, with other elements. The evangelist practically discards the old apocalyptic and substitutes for it the idea of the invisible, spiritual world. One of the ever-recurring words in the Gospel is "truth." Christ came to reveal the truth, to lead us to the truth; he is himself the truth. The word is repeated with different shades of meaning in different contexts, but it always carries with it the suggestion of ultimate reality, as against those earthly shadows which we mistake for truth. It is the same thought which underlies the contrast, pervasive in the Fourth Gospel, of "the world" and that higher sphere out of which Christ came and to which he leads his people. The world, as the evangelist understands it, is the region of the visible. He describes it sometimes as the darkness, as opposed to the true Light. So when he speaks of "heaven" or "heavenly things" he no longer has in mind that

¹² Heb. 6:19.

angelic world which was imagined by the apocalypticists. He uses the traditional word in order to convey in popular language his philosophical conception. Christ came forth from heaven, from the sphere of true being. In his essential nature he had never left heaven, and through him we also may become children of that higher world.

This idealism has remained a vital element in our religion, and perhaps in these days it is the distinctive element. We think of the Christian as of one who stands, amidst the prevailing materialism, for things unseen, who tries to understand the world around him in the light of a spiritual order. This Christian idealism answers to at least one side of Jesus' own conception of the Kingdom of God. To be sure he advanced no philosophical theory. The doctrine of an ultimate reality, shadowed forth in the objects of sense, would have sounded strange to him. Yet when he spoke of the Kingdom he too was thinking of a world in which only spiritual things have value. He described it in the apocalyptic manner as in the future, but his one aim was to make it a present influence in the lives of his people. Looking to the Kingdom which was to come they were to draw near even now to the eternal world.

(4) The New Life

The hope for the Kingdom of God was different, in its nature and origin, from the Platonic doctrine of the ideal world; yet it is not difficult to see how the one conception might combine with the other. It seems otherwise, however, with that other interpretation of the gospel which first meets us in Paul, and gradually became normative for Christian thought. Where Jesus had spoken of the Kingdom we now hear of a new life, born in the believer through faith in Christ. In the Fourth Gospel the very term "Kingdom of God" is virtually discarded. The evangelist was well aware that Jesus had used it, for in one place he alludes to it in passing, as a familiar Christian term.¹⁸ From this it is clear that his general avoidance of it is deliberate. He thinks of Christ as the Son, who possesses in himself the divine life and imparts it to those who abide in him. The message of the Kingdom becomes, for this evangelist, the message of Eternal Life.

It is not surprising that modern writers have here found the crucial proof that Christianity, in the course of the Gentile mission, had changed into a

¹⁸ Jn. 3:3, 5.

new religion. The church, while still calling itself by the name of Jesus, had forgotten or refused to know what he had actually taught. At the heart of his religion there was placed a new conception, borrowed from Oriental mysticism, from which all thinking took its departure. Jesus was no longer the Messiah of the Kingdom but the Redeemer, in union with whom the believer was set free from earthly conditions and was made partaker of the divine life.

It has to be granted that the later doctrine appears to be different, at almost every point, from the message of Jesus himself. Jesus thought of the Kingdom objectively, while the new life is an inward reality. He looked for a future Kingdom, and the new life is given in the present. He expected a sudden crisis, not a silent, spiritual change. He spoke of a Kingdom that would embrace the whole world, while the new life manifests itself in the heart of each individual believer. These are all obvious differences, and we cannot but recognize in view of them that the gospel has been profoundly affected by a foreign influence. Jesus had delivered his message on the ground of the Jewish apocalyptic hope. The later teachers had approached it from

the side of Hellenistic thought, and had thus arrived at a new understanding of its purpose.

This purpose, for Jesus himself, was to effect a change of will. There is no hint in the Synoptic teaching that man is by nature separated from God. On the contrary, God is our Father, from whom we have willfully departed and to whom we may at any time return, sure of a welcome. All that shuts us out from the higher life is the perversity of our own will, and the effort of Jesus is to create in us the change of mind whereby we may find entrance into the Kingdom. But in Greek thought, as far back as we can trace it, there was a deep-seated sense of the misery entailed on man by the mere fact that he is man. What is wrong with us is nothing else than our human nature. The gods, by the law of their being, are free, happy, immortal; but man is made of other substance, and in spite of all virtue and resolve is in bondage to his earthly limitations. He can find no deliverance unless, by some miracle, he comes to participate in the nature of the gods.¹⁴ The belief grew up, and in the first century was widely extended, that such a miracle is possible. By

¹⁴ The Greek conception is admirably presented in Rohde's *Psyche*.

occult knowledge, by initiation into mysterious rites, men may be freed from the burden of mortality and share in the divine essence. This strain of thought had entered into Christianity almost from the moment that it had contact with the Gentile world. That Christ should change the will was felt to be insufficient. How could he effect this change unless he first transmuted this poor human nature into something better? Man's being must in some way become one with the divine being, and this was the true work achieved by Christ. He had changed the water into wine,—the lower nature into the higher. He had come that through him we might have life, that higher life which is in God. From this point of view the gospel was now interpreted.

Much has been made in recent years of the striking resemblance between the Christian doctrine and that which found a place in the mystery religions. There too it was believed that by union with a divine Lord, who had died and risen again, the worshiper might pass into a new state of being. It is not improbable that Paul, at least, was influenced in some indirect fashion by those mystery ideas, but the parallel breaks down as soon as we examine it in detail. The hero worshiped in the mystery cults was a man who

had died by some evil accident and whom the gods had raised, out of pity, to a new and higher existence. The initiate was united with him and shared in his transformation by an outward ritual process. The new life obtained was ethically colorless, and consisted merely in a sort of physical immortality. In the Pauline doctrine all this is different. Christ rose again in virtue of the divine life which was inherently his, although he had submitted for a time to earthly restrictions. Union with him is dependent on faith—the act of self-surrender to the divine love and goodness which Christ revealed. The new life into which we rise with Christ is one of righteousness. These differences cannot be set aside as accidental, but are bound up with the very substance of Paul's Christianity. He had nothing in common with the Pagan cults except the belief, inherent in all Hellenistic religion, that man's nature must be changed before he can attain to the higher life.

This conception of a life different in kind from the natural one had far-reaching effects on Christian thought and worship. It accounts for the central place assigned to the Sacraments. It explains the long and bitter controversy which led to the definition, in metaphysical terms, of the twofold nature

of Christ. Nothing seems to be more remote from the realities of Christian faith than this dreary controversy, but for the Greek mind everything was at stake in it. Since the work of Christ was to impart the divine essence to humanity his relation to God had to be fully established. The Greek Fathers were by no means blind to practical religious issues, but they were convinced that the change of nature was primary. "Christ was made human that we might be made divine." Until that miracle was wrought in us there could be no question of moral and spiritual fellowship with God.

It might appear, then, that in the later interpretation we have traveled far from Jesus' own conception of a Kingdom of God into which men enter by way of repentance and moral obedience. The gospel as presented by Paul and John and the theologians who followed them seems to owe far more to Hellenistic religion than to Jesus himself. Yet in two cardinal respects these later thinkers remain faithful to the teaching of Jesus. (1) On the one hand, while they regard the change of nature as the necessary condition of all else they insist that he who has entered on this new life is morally a new man. His mind is set no longer on things of this world but on those

which are above. He has cleansed himself from all selfish motives and follows that rule of love which he has learned from Christ. It has often been asserted that Paul changed the practical Christianity of the Gospels into an abstract doctrine, but this is palpably untrue. Paul, and one might also say the Fourth Evangelist, are full of the sense that religion means a new character, a new mode of living. They do not conceive of God as absolute Being, after the manner of Greek speculation, but as righteousness, holiness, love. When they speak of oneness with God they mean oneness with him in his moral nature, for this, much more than any of his metaphysical attributes, is the divine essence. It would hardly be too much to say that the will of God is no less primary with Paul and John than with Jesus. They take for granted always that participation in the divine life implies a perfect obedience to God's will. "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life."¹⁵ The divine life and the divine righteousness are thought of together, as things which cannot be separated. Not only is Paul in full harmony with Jesus as to the moral quality of the new life but by means of his

¹⁵ Rom. 5:21.

Hellenistic conception he enforces the demand which is more distinctive than any other of the ethic of Jesus. According to the sayings and parables all true obedience must spring from an inward motive, from a renewed will. Paul insists likewise on this spontaneity which marks all Christian action. "Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh."¹⁸ Morality no longer depends on an outward law but flows of its own accord out of the new nature created in us by Christ.

(2) Again, it is always assumed by the later teachers that the new life involves a communion of believers with one another. Here we have one of the most striking differences of the Christian conception from that Hellenistic one which might seem in so many ways to resemble it. The life bestowed on the initiate of a mystery cult was purely individual: in Christianity it is associated with the community. Springing from faith it is intensely personal, but by his own faith the believer unites himself with all Christ's people. Each of the members participates in the life of the whole body. It is not a little remarkable that those New Testament writings which deal most profoundly with the inward, personal life

¹⁸ Gal. 5:16.

are also those which give a central place to the idea of the church; one need only instance the Fourth Gospel and the Epistle to Ephesians. Personal religion and fervid churchmanship have often been regarded as mutually exclusive, but in the New Testament they go together. The union with Christ which changes you into a new man brings you into fellowship with the brethren. It enlists you on the side of that great cause in which Christ is leader, and which at last will overcome the world. Apart from this larger interest in which you share, you cannot yourself be perfected. Here we can plainly trace the influence on all later Christian thinking of Jesus' own message of the Kingdom. There has been no displacement of the original gospel by a mystical doctrine. Behind the idea of a new inward life, born of the Spirit, there is still the anticipation of a reign of God over his people. It is hardly possible, indeed, to distinguish between the new birth and entrance into the new community.

We have already seen that for Jesus himself the supreme blessing of the Kingdom was Life. He describes it occasionally by the very term characteristic of the Fourth Gospel as "eternal life." In the Synoptic Gospels, however, "eternal life" is to be

understood literally as "life in the coming aeon," in the future age. It signifies that the present life, transported into the ampler conditions of the Kingdom, will realize itself fully and harmoniously. In the Fourth Gospel the word "eternal" denotes a difference in quality. The life bestowed by Christ belongs to the higher sphere of being, and is divine instead of earthly. With the later teachers the idea of the coming Kingdom seems to fall entirely out of sight. But while they think of the life as bestowed now, in response to faith in Christ, they still regard it as the life of the hereafter. This, indeed, belongs to the essence of their conception. They believe that amidst the earthly conditions men can reach forward to what they shall be, dying to the old life and entering on their citizenship in heaven. Paul, more especially, connects his whole teaching on the new life with his doctrine of the Spirit—the supernatural power which comes forth from the higher world. In the Spirit we receive the earnest or first fruits of our inheritance. In so far as it dwells in us we possess already that immortal life which is laid up for the future. At first sight there may seem to be little relation between Paul's doctrine of the Spirit and Jesus' conception of the Kingdom of God. Yet

perhaps it is just here that we can best discern Paul's essential fidelity to the teaching of the Gospels. The great aim of Jesus was to link up man's present life with a glorious future. He declared that the Kingdom was at hand, and that we must live our lives as under its shadow, and realize here on earth that we are God's children. Where Jesus speaks of the nearness of the Kingdom, Paul thinks of the Spirit working in our hearts. No doubt there are elements in his thought which we do not find in Jesus. He turns the language of apocalyptic into a mystical theology which is quite foreign to the Synoptic message. Yet he reasserts in his own manner the thought of Jesus that the Kingdom is near—so near that we can yield ourselves now to that divine power which is presently to be revealed.

Not only is the later conception in accord with that of Jesus but it brings into clear relief a side of his teaching which is equally present in the Synoptic Gospels though it lies beneath the surface. Often we are told that they represent him as little more than a prophet of righteousness, and that any other view of him is due to a perversion or a misunderstanding on the part of the later church. His aim was to impress on men the principles of right living,

to establish a new social order, to make love and service the sole motives of human action. But we miss the very heart of his message when we suppose that he made right living an end in itself. He insisted on the doing of God's will because he saw in this the true path toward fellowship with God. It was this deeper import in the teaching on which Paul and the others laid hold, and which they disclose with a matchless power and insight. They do not obscure the original gospel or put something else in place of it, but they penetrate to its inward meaning. Jesus had taught the new righteousness and had shown by word and example how men might follow it in their own lives and in all their intercourse with their fellow men. Love, justice, forgiveness—these are God's attributes, and according as we manifest them we become like God. But the new law will fail in its purpose, as the old one did, unless it helps us toward a deeper and fuller life. This, in its ultimate issue, was the message of Jesus, and although it underlies all the Synoptic sayings we are often unconscious of it when we take them by themselves. Their true drift is illuminated by that later gospel which may appear, at first sight, to leave them out of account. It enables us to grasp the

promise of the Kingdom in its full significance as the message of a new life.

(5) *The Church*

In the course of the early centuries the idea of the Kingdom came to merge itself, almost entirely, in that of the church. Augustine, in the memorable work which marks the beginning of the second great phase of Christian history, conceives of a City of God in which the life of mankind since the creation is to find its fulfillment. He takes for granted that this city or commonwealth is now realizing itself in the church, which is entrusted with supernatural powers, and is destined to supersede all earthly kingdoms. It was on this theory that the dominant church of the next thousand years was founded. In the New Testament there is no identification of the Kingdom and the church, but it was assumed, almost from the first, that they were somehow bound together. What Jesus had promised was a universal reign of God, and the church was the instrument toward this consummation. It was like the earthly outpost of the heavenly community, and shared in its nature and privileges. No clear line could be drawn between the Kingdom and the church. This

belief is read back into the teaching of Jesus in our Synoptic Gospels, especially in the Gospel of Matthew. It comes out most clearly in Matthew's version of some of the Parables. They were spoken of the Kingdom and their true meaning may still be conjectured; but they are so reported as to bear directly on the duties and perplexities of the church. In the Fourth Gospel, although the church is never actually mentioned, the idea of it becomes central. The whole purpose of Jesus' work is understood in its relation to the community of his people, in whom he will be glorified.

It has often been pointed out that this exaltation of the church is quite foreign to the teaching of Jesus. Indeed it is more than doubtful whether he contemplated the rise of a society such as came into being after his death. He nowhere alludes to the church except in two passages of Matthew, both of which may be set aside, on critical grounds, as unauthentic.¹⁷ He spoke of the Kingdom as close at hand, and while he may not have expected it to come immediately he cannot have anticipated a lapse of ages, during which a great institution would be necessary for the furtherance of his work. For that

¹⁷ Mt. 16:18; 18:17.

part, he looked for the speedy end of all earthly institutions, and cannot have meant to create another. Must we not conclude that the church, as it grew up in the ages following, was not only outside of the plan of Jesus but directly opposed to it?

We are further reminded that the confusion of church and Kingdom may well be explained from purely historical causes. It was due, in some measure, to the failure of the hope of the Parousia. As years went on and a whole generation passed away without any sign of the Lord's return, it was concluded that his promise had been misunderstood. The expected Kingdom had not come, but the church, which looked to Christ as its Lord, was growing from more to more and seemed destined to overcome the world. It was the church he must have meant when he spoke of the future Kingdom. In a more general way the identification with the church was due to historical causes. It is the fate of all ideals to harden, sooner or later, into institutions. They cannot make themselves effectual except through some organization, and by and by the organization displaces the ideal itself. Almost every movement which had its birth in a noble enthusiasm has ended in that manner. The spiritual impulse

has died down and nothing remains but the mechanism it has created. So in the view of many the formation of the church was the great tragedy of our religion. Jesus had appeared with his glorious ideal of the Kingdom of God. He had inspired a multitude of his followers to work for this ideal, and they had formed themselves into a society. As time went on the society became an end in itself. Jesus had proclaimed the Kingdom, and instead of it there arose the church.

It may fairly be argued, however, that when we examine the origin of the church even from the strictly historical point of view these explanations are not sufficient. Jesus may not have foreseen the church as it afterwards became, but when he proclaimed the Kingdom he also formed a society to work for it. His company of twelve disciples was only the nucleus of a much larger body of followers whom he attracted even in his lifetime. The church grew directly out of this fellowship which owed its origin to Jesus himself. Again, whether he literally founded the church or not, he made it necessary. His teaching, as we have seen, was social in its nature, and those who tried to follow it were compelled to form themselves into a brotherhood. There is no

sign that the church was called into being by any formal and deliberate act. It was the natural and inevitable outcome of those ideas which the disciples had learned from Jesus. Once more, the Kingdom had always been associated with a community of God's people. For Jewish apocalyptic this community had been Israel, and while Jesus broke away from the purely national idea he still took for granted that God would reign over a people. He taught that while men must enter into a personal relation to God they could only serve him when they were united with one another. The great commandment is not one but two: "Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart and thy neighbour as thyself." Everywhere the message has this social implication, and could not but give rise to a society.

At the same time the society which Jesus contemplated was of a new and unique kind. He believed that the world as now constituted was soon to come to an end. A new order would be established in which all earthly institutions would cease to be, and men were to throw in their lot, even now, with that new order. They were to live as they would hereafter live in the Kingdom. This was the task to which the first disciples set themselves. As a com-

pany of men and women who were waiting for the Kingdom they felt as if already they belonged to it, and their whole aim was to mark themselves off from all existing societies. They governed their lives not by any accepted laws but by those principles, revealed by Jesus, which would hold good in the new age. They had no organization or official leaders but trusted wholly to the guidance of the Spirit, as it declared itself in the ecstatic utterances of the prophets. Their citizenship was in heaven, and in all their practice and intercourse they sought to conform to the higher order.

This belief that while living in the world they belonged to the Kingdom was intensely real to the early disciples, and here we may discover the gerinal idea of the church. A mystery attached to it from the first. Its members were supposed to have entered in some measure already on the conditions of the hereafter. To be baptized into the church meant that you had passed into a higher sphere; you became "holy"—set apart from the world—and the church in its totality was the "ecclesia of God," the divinely chosen community. This attempt to realize the idea of a society which existed on earth but stood for a supernatural order and was governed by

the Spirit, could not be sustained. By and by, with the waning of the early enthusiasm, the church conformed itself to the laws which hold good for every human institution. It became more and more absorbed in the perfecting of its organization, and sought finally to suppress all free activity of the Spirit. Yet beneath the formalism the original idea has always persisted. The church to this day feels itself to be a society apart, representing an order which is not that of the visible world. No one reproaches the state or the municipality because it studies its own interests and aims at securing for its members the maximum of material good. That is its function as an organism which has grown out of earthly conditions and is intended to serve them. But to call the church "worldly" has always been felt to be its worst condemnation. By its very idea it stands for something beyond this present world. It has failed of its purpose unless it somehow impresses on men the fact of another, invisible order.

Here, then, we discern the true connection between the teaching of Jesus and the rise of the church after his death. It was not by any perversion, willful or accidental, that his message of the Kingdom came to be interpreted in terms of the

church. There was a real sense in which the church was related to the Kingdom, was itself the Kingdom. It is true that Jesus looked for a miraculous change, whereby the Kingdom would come into being in a moment. When the church, establishing itself slowly through human instruments was taken as a substitute for the Kingdom it seemed like a tacit acknowledgment that Jesus had been a visionary. His hope in its original form had come to nothing and this visible Kingdom was accepted in its stead. Yet the thought of Jesus, expressed as it was in apocalyptic language, had been that God himself must bring in the Kingdom; and from this belief the church has never departed. It was the grand conviction of Paul and the other missionaries that through Christ a divine power had entered into the world. What men could never accomplish for themselves had been done for them by the grace of God, which they must be willing to receive by the act of faith. The church has always testified to this higher power working by means of it for man's salvation. Its message in all its forms has rested on this belief that God himself will bring his will to pass, and here we can recognize the essential thought of Jesus.

It is not difficult, then, to see how the Kingdom

became identified with the church. Between the idea in Jesus' mind and the society which took shape after his death there were points of real resemblance. (1) The Kingdom was that condition of things in which God would reign. Taken in its widest sense this implied that the whole creation would undergo a change, whereby it would be molded perfectly to the divine purpose. This larger vision was doubtless present to Jesus, but he thought of the Kingdom primarily as God's reign over men—the subjection of all human desires and motives to God's will. It was to realize this new condition that the church came into being. Within the Christian brotherhood men had broken with the world and its service. They had come under a higher law, and sought in their own little circle to anticipate that future time when God would reign on earth as in heaven.

(2) Jesus had looked forward to a holy community, a true Israel of God. No doubt his ultimate concern was with the personal life. The Kingdom would come when each man had the law of God written in his heart and would know God for himself as Father. But this relation to God was to be maintained and fostered through the relation to other men. In his vision of the Kingdom Jesus

thought of a perfect fellowship of men with one another, and the church arose out of the effort to realize this ideal of Jesus. He had foretold a community ruled wholly by the will of God; might it not be possible, in some measure, to anticipate this community? It is false to say that the hope of the Kingdom was forgotten in the building up of a mere organization. The organization itself had arisen, in the last resort, out of the hope.

(3) The Kingdom was to mean the reversal of present standards—the exaltation of a new type of character. From the Beatitudes onward this is an idea that runs continually through the teaching of Jesus. The church set itself to give effect to it in a visible society. It conferred honor on those whom the world hitherto had despised. Service, humility, patience under wrongs, preference of others to oneself had always been the marks of weakness. The church accepted them as virtues. It based itself on those standards of excellence which, according to Jesus, were to obtain in the Kingdom of God. Not only so, but it believed that in this manner it would some day overcome the world. Nothing in the New Testament is more impressive than the magnificent confidence of the church, even in those early days

when it seemed utterly negligible. Paul thinks of his handfuls of obscure converts as the heirs of the future. The seer of Revelation describes the persecuted church as already triumphing over the all-powerful empire. What seems its weakness is to prove its invincible strength. So the church's aim was to foreshadow the Kingdom by accepting its new scale of values. It may be granted that even in New Testament times the baser estimates too often prevailed, and perhaps a day may never come when the church will attain to anything but a compromise between the law of the Kingdom and the law of this world. Jesus himself, it must always be remembered, looked for a fulfillment which would only be possible in a new age, when all conditions would be different. None the less the church, ideally, is that society in which men take rank according to their love and service, and all things are measured by their spiritual worth. Jesus' great conception of a new order in which the world's standards would be reversed has been at least partially realized in the church.

Too much, indeed, has commonly been made of the shortcomings of the church when compared with Jesus' demand. Every attempt to embody an ideal

in the resisting material of ordinary life is bound to fall short, and men declare, as they look at the fragmentary result, that the high hopes and imaginations have come to nothing. Yet an ideal is futile unless it finds some embodiment, however imperfect. It is not debased but made richer and more significant through the halting endeavor to change it into fact. So we may truly claim that the message of Jesus has come to its own through the church. Taken by itself the message might seem fantastic, and in all times there have been those who regarded Jesus as a visionary, out of touch with the realities of life. But his disciples believed in his vision, and tried to build up a community which in some degree would answer to it. They required that in this society men should live together as brethren, should seek after love and goodness as the best possessions, should find the true end of their being in fellowship with God. In the historical church, with all its errors and inconsistencies, we can see at least the reflection of the Kingdom as conceived by Jesus.

It is only when we think of the church in its relation to the Kingdom that we can understand the religious value which is assigned to it in the New Testament. For Paul and John the purpose of man's

life is to share in the life of God, but this idea of the new life is blended with that of the church. Paul's chief care when he began a mission was to form a community, consisting, it might be, of only three or four members, which should represent the church. Apart from this communion he seems to have deemed the Christian life impossible. He takes for granted that the incestuous man at Corinth when cut off from the church will fall back into the hands of Satan.¹⁸ He thinks of the Spirit, which awakens and nourishes the new life, as residing in the church, through which it is mediated to the individual believer. In the Fourth Gospel this connection of the church with the new life is everywhere assumed. The Gospel culminates in the seventeenth chapter, in which Christ offers his prayer for the church. Throughout the Supper discourse which has gone immediately before he has spoken of that eternal life which he brings to men, and now he declares that the life-giving union with himself is effected through fellowship with the church. "I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one."¹⁹ How had these mystical ideas attached themselves to the visible society? How had this institution which

¹⁸ 1 Cor. 5:5.

¹⁹ Jn. 17:23.

proclaimed the message become an integral part of the message itself? The answer is that behind the conception of the church lay that of the Kingdom. Everything that Jesus had spoken of the Kingdom was transferred to the church, which represented it on earth.

It is in the Epistle to the Ephesians that the mystical doctrine of the church finds its most memorable expression. The author of this Epistle, whether Paul himself or one of his disciples, is concerned with the ultimate plan which God is seeking to fulfill in his government of the world. It has hitherto been hidden even from the angels, but can now be discerned in the light of the Christian message, and it consists in this—that “God has purposed to reunite all things to himself in Christ.”²⁰ The primal harmony of the universe has somehow been broken. There is conflict in the heavenly world, in human society, in man’s inner life. All the warring elements are finally to be reconciled by their converging in Christ as the one center, and the instrument which God is using for this world-wide reconciliation is the church. Jews and Gentiles, all diverse races and interests, have become united in one body of Christ.

²⁰ Eph. 1:10.

Through the church, in which he immediately dwells, Christ will gather to himself all conflicting forces and bring the world back to harmony. The universe will be filled by him as he now fills the church. In the cosmical sweep of the writer's thought there is much that anticipates the later Gnostic speculations, and it can hardly be doubted that the resemblance is more than accidental. Those vast problems which Greek metaphysic had bequeathed to Christianity, and which Gnosticism was to attempt to solve, had already begun to occupy the New Testament thinkers. Yet in this Ephesian Epistle we can clearly trace the influence of Jesus' own conception of the Kingdom of God. The religious idea is construed philosophically, and applied to those questions which had proved beyond the reach of reason. What is God's purpose with the world? Is there any meaning behind the strife and confusion in which our eyes can see nothing but a blind whirl of chance? The writer discerns a plan in the light of which everything must be interpreted. God has so ordered the whole course of the world that all things will at last be reconciled to himself in Christ. Nothing could seem more different from the teaching of the Gospels than the abstruse speculations of this Epistle.

Yet they both turn on the same conception of the Kingdom of God.

For this writer, therefore, the church is the instrument by which God is working out his purpose not for men only but for the universe. Christ has formed for himself a community in which men of all races and classes are united in the service of God—but this is only the beginning. The reconciliation now manifest in the church will extend ever more widely. In its final consummation the Kingdom will embrace the whole world, brought back into harmony. Through the church—and it is this which gives it a mysterious significance—God has begun the fulfillment of his eternal plan.

So the church became in some degree identified for later thought with the Kingdom. It cannot be denied that the message of Jesus was thus in many respects obscured. Not only so but the church, believing that it was itself the Kingdom, laid claim to mysterious powers and privileges. It established a tyranny to which men would never have submitted if they had not learned to accept it as the visible reign of God. There is truth in the view that the coming of the Kingdom has been retarded by this confusion of it with the church. Men have looked

only to the earthly institution and have assumed that by membership in it they have entered the Kingdom. Yet the knowledge that in some manner it represents the Kingdom foretold by Jesus has been the safeguard and inspiration of the church. Even in its worst days it has never wholly forgotten its divine calling. In the belief that it was bound up mysteriously with a higher order it has been enabled to rise above the world.

IV

CONCLUSION

OUR religion began with the proclamation, "The Kingdom of God is at hand," and this has always been its central message. It might seem to have changed the message, almost from the beginning. The disciples, while calling themselves by the name of Christ, made him the sponsor for a mystical or social or philosophical teaching which had no place in his own gospel. But when we look deeper we can discern his idea of the Kingdom underlying all later thought and expressing itself in many different forms.

The idea had come down to Jesus through Hebrew religion. God had always been worshiped as King of Israel, and a time was looked for when he would be acknowledged by the whole world. In those coming days Israel would be exalted, peace and righteousness would dwell on the earth, nature itself would be restored to its original glory. This hope of a

Golden Age was splendidly set forth in Old Testament prophecy, and was elaborated in the apocalyptic books under influences which had come in from Persia. But while now associated with the type of thought which we call apocalyptic, it was part of ordinary Judaism in the time of Jesus. His teaching was new, not because he had attached himself to some eccentric sect, but because he gave a new scope and direction to the prevailing hope.

His difference from other Jewish teachers consisted, broadly speaking, in this—that where they were concerned with the outward aspects he was intent on the inward character of the Kingdom. A time was coming when the will of God would be perfectly fulfilled and men would enter into a new relation to God. All else was viewed in the light of this spiritual change. There would be a new community, based not on race or privilege but on common obedience to God as Father. There would be a new order, not merely because nature would return to its pristine glory, but because the higher, invisible world would become real. It followed that many of the apocalyptic ideas had little meaning for Jesus, even when in form he retained them. The Kingdom was in the future, but in so far as they submitted to

God's will men could enter it in the present. It was to come suddenly and supernaturally, yet for God's servants it was an inward possession. God was to bring it in by his own immediate act; to this belief Jesus always remained faithful. Yet he allowed for other modes of divine action than those of visible miracle. The Kingdom was in its essence moral and spiritual, and God would establish it by renewing the hearts of men.

Nothing has so obscured Jesus' conception as the attempt to sum it up in a single formula. It has been assumed that since he took up the apocalyptic tradition his thought must all be construed apocalyptically; since his teaching is mainly ethical he had nothing in his mind but an ethical ideal; since he dealt so largely with social relations his interest was in the building up of a new society. All one-sided interpretation of this kind means a narrowing and distortion of the idea of Jesus. The Kingdom as he conceived it was at once the higher, spiritual order, the better righteousness, the larger human brotherhood, the life of inward fellowship with God. None of these excludes the others. All are necessary to the completeness of the hope of that new age when God will be all in all.

Jesus' own teaching on the Kingdom cannot be rightly understood apart from its development in later New Testament thought. Paul and the other writers seldom employ the actual term which Jesus had used. They speak of the new life, the spiritual world, the functions and destiny of the church; and we seem to have passed into a region of thought in which the original message was forgotten. Yet the real theme is still the Kingdom. The great conception is taken out of its apocalyptic setting and brought into line with Greek and Oriental speculation. Ideas which for Jesus had been moral and spiritual are construed metaphysically and are connected with a sacramental mode of worship. But behind all the later interpretation we can discern the authentic idea of Jesus. Not only so, but there are aspects of his thought which are presented more amply and clearly in the later teaching than in his own. Within the Jewish forms which he inherited he was unable to express his full meaning. We are conscious ever and again that he is striving to put new wine into old bottles—to convey some great truth in language or imagery which is too narrow for it. In the Gentile church these larger implications of the message found release. The categories worked

out by centuries of philosophical reflection supplied the necessary vehicle whereby the thought of Jesus came to its own.

The idea of the Kingdom which Jesus took over from apocalyptic Judaism impresses us now as utterly fantastic. With its assumption that God would shortly interpose to destroy the world and create in its stead a new supernatural order it involved a mode of thinking which even in the first century was out of date. When he attached his religion to this outworn conception Jesus might seem to have excluded it from any chance of permanence. For a little while his followers might be held together by a fanatical hope but they would soon be disillusioned, and the religion of the Kingdom would go the way of all movements which have no basis in reality. This, we know, was what his enemies anticipated. Gamaliel, in the book of Acts, compares the new teaching to other apocalyptic excitements of the recent past and draws his moral: "Refrain from these men and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men it will come to nought."¹ Yet the religion has endured. It passed from Palestine into

¹ Ac. 5:38.

the Gentile world and is still winning new victories, after two thousand years. It has held its ground amidst all the later systems which have arisen from time to time, and has ultimately survived them. And when we look for the secret of its permanence we find it in the very fact that it has proclaimed the Kingdom of God. This conception which seemed to bind it hopelessly to an obsolete mythology has proved vital and inexhaustible. Why is it that in all ages men have thus responded to that message of the Kingdom?

(1) For one thing, although the hope had come to Jesus under the peculiar forms of Jewish thought, it had its springs in needs and aspirations which are common to all men. In every religion which has broken through the confines of mere savagery there is at least some suggestion of the hope. We can trace it in old Babylonian speculation, in the Persian belief that the Light would at last overcome the Darkness, in Plato's theory of the ideal world. All nations have looked beyond the misery of the present to a coming Golden Age. Religion has its very roots in man's invincible faith that God is over all, and that his will must at last prevail. To this deep-

seated belief that there is some high fulfillment toward which the world is traveling we must attribute the enduring power of Jesus' message.

(2) Again, he identified the hope of the Kingdom with a moral and spiritual ideal. The hope had grown up in the dark days of Israel when hearts were failing. Men looked beyond the disastrous present to the coming day when God would assert himself as King, and were filled with a new courage. In all ages this thought of some great good reserved for the future has been the inspiring motive. Without the vision of a fulfillment to which all things are working, all impulse and meaning would die out of human life. It was the grand achievement of Jesus that he blended this vision of the future with the moral ideal. By proclaiming the Kingdom he roused his followers to a boundless enthusiasm, in the strength of which they set forth on their world-wide mission. It seemed at the time to be a passing excitement which would subside of itself with the failure of the apocalyptic hope. But he had filled this hope with a new significance. As we study his teaching we ask ourselves, "What did he mean by the Kingdom of God? Did he think of it as the coming age or as the perfect obedience to

God's will?" The question cannot be answered, for in the mind of Jesus the two things had become inseparable. The glorious future meant also the will of God. According as we become God's children we bring the Kingdom nearer, we have part in it even now. So the enthusiasm that springs from the hope of the future was directed henceforth to the life of moral obedience. The service of God and the splendid vision went hand in hand and gave meaning to one another. It had hitherto been taken for granted that the moral law had been imposed by some higher power and must be enforced in spite of man's resistance. All religions and ethical systems made it their one task to devise checks and compulsions which would hold men down to their hard but necessary duty. Jesus for the first time put inspiration into the moral ideal. He enlisted on its side all those ardors which were awakened by the thought of the future. It is this which gives an enduring value to his message of the Kingdom. He took what in itself was a wild apocalyptic hope and made it the living and uplifting power behind all action.

(3) Once more, the permanence of his message is due, above all, to its many-sidedness. We have seen that in the New Testament itself the idea of the

Kingdom is understood in various ways, and every succeeding age has placed its own construction on it. In view of these many interpretations, all of which can be supported by actual sayings of Jesus, it has often been held that he contradicted himself, or that ideas which came in from later reflection have been read into his teaching. But all the interpretations are valid. He started from the traditional belief in a new age when God would reign, but saw what was involved in this reign of God. It would mean a new righteousness, a higher spiritual order, a perfected human society, an inward fellowship with God. All this was implied for Jesus in the idea of the Kingdom. Men seized on his message and began, almost at once, to explain it in different ways, according to their own beliefs and temperaments.

Christianity has broken into many divisions, each claiming to represent the authentic gospel and often opposed to each other in bitter antagonism. But all of them are right. Jesus proclaimed a message of which some aspect is truly preserved in each of the countless sects which prophesy in his name. Yet all of them are wrong; for in the thought of Jesus all those elements were fused together, and none of them can be rightly understood when they are taken

separately. It is commonly maintained that Jesus brought an altogether simple message which in the course of ages has been complicated and overlaid. Our task, we are told, is to clear away the accretions and go "back to Christ," back to the one simple idea which was everything. But his message, the more we examine it, was broad and manifold. We do not recover it by discarding all the later interpretations but by including them. The error of the church has not consisted in explaining the message so variously but in breaking it into fragments, and insisting that some one fragment was the whole. We shall get "back to Christ" when we are able once more to apprehend all the diverse elements of his thought in their original harmony. To return in this sense to Jesus himself is indeed the task of the church.

His conception was a manifold one, and for this reason it must always remain central in our religion. It gathers into itself all the hopes and beliefs and sympathies that enter into man's higher life. The generations follow one another, and as each comes in with new ideals it complains that Christianity is bound up with the bygone order, and has no fresh

direction to offer. Yet when men go back to Jesus' message of the Kingdom they always find in it some truth, hitherto neglected, on which the new knowledge and the new endeavor can base themselves. "In my Father's house are many mansions"—this great Johannine forecast of the Kingdom is true also of Jesus' conception of it. There is room within its borders for all the meanings which men have found in it, or will yet find. All fulfillments of the divine purpose were foreshadowed by Jesus when he spoke of the Kingdom of God. The promise of it will always, as at the first, sum up his "gospel."

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